

Queen gives keynote address at Middle East Youth Summit

Paintings by Lebanese-American artist Erel Adnan entitled "Artist's Book of Art and Poetry" at Darat Al Funun, Jafar Wehdeh, until May 21. Also displaying works by Berlin-based Syrian artist Marwan Bashi entitled "A Suite of Heads," and works by contemporary Arab artists.

Starvation reported in barred Afghan region

ISLAMABAD (RI) — The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) said Friday it had unconfirmed reports that some 100 people had starved to death in a central Afghan region, partially due to a blockade by the Taliban militia.

It said tens of thousands more could face starvation "in the coming month" in the opposition-held Hazarajat region, which has been blockaded by the Taliban since last year.

Taliban negotiators and the opposition alliance broke off peace talks in Islamabad Thursday night for two days.

Meeting sources cited the Taliban's refusal to accept an opposition demand to lift the Hazarajat siege as reason for the deadlock.

The talks, being held under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, are due to resume Sunday morning on return of Taliban's delegation after consulting its leadership in Afghanistan.

Thursday's deadlock followed a breakthrough Wednesday when the two sides agreed to form a 40-member peace commission of Islamic scholars, or ulema, to negotiate an end to the 20-year civil war and not to object to each other's 20-member lists for that body.

The WFP said in a statement issued in Islamabad it had five missions exploring Hazarajat, a chronic food-deficit region that is home to some 1.2 million people

"who under best of circumstances eke out a rough living in mountain-clinging villages."

"The missions, some on foot, in trucks or on horseback, have been sending back preliminary information on pockets of severe hunger, dwindling food supplies and empty market-places," it said.

"They have filed unconfirmed reports of as many as 100 deaths by starvation — mostly women and children."

The WFP said it was gravely concerned over growing reports from its field missions that "tens of thousands of people may be facing starvation in the coming month."

The Hazarajat region, comprising Bamiyan province and parts of Ghor, Wardak, Uruzgan and Ghazni provinces, has been isolated to the south, west and east by the blockade by Taliban, which controls more than two-thirds of Afghanistan.

The Taliban says food supplies to Hazarajat would be used to feed opposition fighters.

The WFP said it had distributed some 6,000 tonnes of potatoes and wheat in early winter to Bamiyan and Ghor, "which may have allowed a good proportion of the population to survive the winter."

"But resupply from WFP storehouses to the north in Uzbekistan has been blocked for months by a combination of winter — which normally closes all but one route — and the

intransigence of local (opposition) commanders, which precluded passage on the remaining road," it said.

After reports filtered in as snow melted that food stocks were nearly empty throughout the vast mountainous region, the WFP issued an appeal to donors last week for \$300,000 to begin buying wheat and potatoes locally.

The humanitarian aid agency said it had been opening roads to the north and to the west into Ghor province to gain both information and access for food aid. "In the Lal district of Ghor, WFP teams travelling from village to village heard several reports of starvation," it said.

It said its mission in Uruzgan province had reported "some 3,000 families will be running out of food in a matter of days. The team now in Ghazni advises that 45 people in that area are reported to have died of starvation."

The WFP said convoys would head to Bamiyan after it could ascertain the safety of routes from its northern wheat stocks.

"But even if that passage opens, WFP officials have warned that such aid will be insufficient and only a political decision to lift the blockade to the south can restore normal life and trading patterns for the people of Hazarajat, as well as allow convoys of food aid from WFP's better-stocked storehouses in neighbouring Pakistan," it said.

UK's Blair marks first year in power on poll high

LONDON (RI) — Tony Blair marked his first year in power Friday with a warning against complacency, but an opinion poll showed he was Britain's most popular prime minister since World War II.

A Gallup survey showed Mr. Blair was even more popular with Britons than such illustrious predecessors as Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher.

The poll in the Daily Telegraph showed Mr. Blair's Labour Party on 54 per cent, 29 points ahead of the opposition Conservatives and with more than double the 13-point advantage Labour enjoyed at the election a year ago.

The survey showed that Mr. Blair enjoyed a stunning 72 per cent approval rating, compared to 48 per cent for Mr. Churchill after a year in office following the 1951 election and 41 per cent for Mr. Thatcher in 1980, 12 months after she took power.

Writing in the Guardian newspaper, Mr. Blair said: "It has been a good start. But, as ever, there should be no complacency. There is a lot of progress to be made."

He said Labour must never forget that it was a privilege to be in government.

"We are here not for what power can do for us, but for what we can do with power to help the people we serve," the prime minister added.

Mr. Blair stunned Britain with a landslide general election victory last May 1 that ended 18 years of Conservative rule.

Friday, when newspapers normally hostile to Labour were praising Mr. Blair.

"The most remarkable aspect of this administration is its genius for accentuating the positive and imbuing the nation with a feeling of well-being," said the Daily Mail.

Its mid-market rival, the Express, said: "There will be difficulties ahead. But what we have seen so far is

that these will be tackled with vigour and with confidence."

"Tackled, above all — and as the polls show — with the solid backing of the people."

The Mirror — a traditional Labour backer — was even more effusive in its praise of "a man who lived up to his promise."

"A remarkable start has been made," the Daily said. "Now they must get on and finish the job."

William Hague, who became leader of the Conservatives after their devastating electoral defeat, said Labour's successes were built on the foundations left by the previous administration.

"This government has started out with the best economic situation of any government since World War I," he said on BBC radio.

"More people believe they have broken their promises than have kept them," Mr. Hague said.

Apartheid-era generals to be grilled on 1993 raid

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — Two apartheid-era military generals are to be grilled by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on a 1993 raid in which five sleeping youths were killed, the TRC announced here.

Outgoing chief of the South African National Defence Force General Georg Meiring and retired army General Kat Liebenberg have been subpoenaed to appear at a closed-door session of the TRC in Cape Town Monday, a commission statement said.

The raid was carried out by the military on a house in Umata, in Eastern Cape province, wrongly believed to be a base of guerrilla group, the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA).

The apartheid government at the time, headed by former President Frederik de Klerk, was severely embarrassed by the incident, which came close to derailing power-sharing talks that eventually ended in historic all-race elections in April 1994.

Generals Meiring and Liebenberg will be questioned on all operational orders and instructions to the 12-member team who carried out the early-morning raid on Oct. 8, 1993, the TRC said.

Transkei at the time was head of the now-disbanded Transkei tribal homeland, one of four nominally-independent states created during apartheid.

The statement said the TRC wants the generals to name the people involved

in the planning of the operation and to provide details of the intelligence reports that led to the operation.

Last month, police sergeant Thapelo Mbeto gave testimony on the Umata raid to a closed TRC hearing.

He was involved in police investigations into APLA activities at the time.

Gen. Meiring announced his retirement last month after an uproar over a flawed military intelligence report of an alleged coup plot he presented to President Nelson Mandela before thoroughly investigating its veracity.

A judicial commission appointed by Mr. Mandela later found the report to be the "fulmination of an active imagination" and



South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung (right) shakes hands with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at the Presidential Mansion Blue House in Seoul (Reuters photo)

NATO expansion 'buries cold war'

SEOUL (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Friday welcomed the senate's ratification of a NATO expansion treaty, saying it had put an end to the cold war in Europe even though it still exists on the divided Korean Peninsula.

She told reporters she wanted to be "very congratulatory about the fact that we have actually put an end to the cold war in every way now with the NATO expansion vote that took place in Washington."

"With an overwhelming vote in the senate, the area of security in Europe has expanded and a moment of injustice has been undone, promises have been kept and a unified Europe has begun," she told reporters.

She stressed that she was speaking "while in the Korean Peninsula, where the cold war still exists."

Thursday, the U.S. Senate ratified the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) expansion treaty that brings in three new nations.

Mrs. Albright, who arrived Friday for a brief two-day visit, also earlier said in a statement that Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic "will now belong to our family in fact."

Mrs. Albright said she was "deeply gratified" by

the vote. She said the U.S. Senate vote "sends a message to our old and new allies that America will continue to defend its interest in the peace and security of Europe."

"It will reassure all of Europe's new democracies that we are not going to treat them as second class citizens in the future simply because they were subjugated in the past."

Mrs. Albright is of Czech-Jewish origin and was a strong supporter of NATO enlargement to the former Warsaw Pact countries.

The three countries will officially join NATO in April 1999 at the alliance's 50th anniversary summit.

Kim Dae-Jung meets Albright

SEOUL (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met Friday with South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung, calling him "one of the world's true champions of freedom."

During the meeting between Mr. Kim and Mrs. Albright, the South Korean president "explained the government's new policies toward North Korea, and said the two countries should maintain stronger ties to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula and East Asia," a presidential statement said.

"President Kim also asked for U.S. active support and investment to help the country overcome the financial crisis," it said.

"This is Mrs. Albright's first meeting with Mr. Kim since he took office in February. "This is my first trip to the Republic of Korea following the election and inauguration of President Kim Dae-Jung. And President Kim is one of the world's true champions of freedom," Mrs. Albright said.

"I met him for the first time when I came to Korea as a private citizen in the mid-1980s, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to see him as president of his country," she said at the press conference before meeting with security advisor Lim Dong-Won and Mr. Kim.

Mr. Kim is scheduled to visit the United States in June, but no dates have yet been set.

Havel ready to return home in days

INNSBRUCK, Austria (AFP) — Czech President Vaclav Havel should be well enough to return home Wednesday, his doctors said, after emergency surgery more than two weeks ago.

Doctors at the Innsbruck hospital, where the former dissident playwright was rushed from his holiday home in the Austrian Tyrol for surgery on April 14, said his health was good enough for him to be repatriated.

The return to Prague will probably be by air ambulance, they added.

Thursday Ernst Bodner, who carried out the operation on Mr. Havel, 61, to repair a perforated intestine, said Mr. Havel was continuing "to recover without problems."

The Czech president, who has undergone a series of other minor operations since the emergency surgery, has begun eating solids, can get out of bed and has daily physiotherapy sessions.

Earlier this week, doctors fitted a device to help him speak more easily. He has also had tracheotomy and undergone procedures to help his breathing, weakened since a 1996 operation to remove a tumour from his right lung.

Tibetan protester cremated amid anti-Chinese rallies

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A Tibetan, who set himself on fire to protest police breaking up a marathon hunger strike here, was cremated Friday in northern India amid anti-Chinese rallies, witnesses said.

Tibetans took to the streets during the cremation of Thupten Ngodub, who died in New Delhi Wednesday of 100-per cent burns.

The cremation, attended by thousands of Tibetans, was held in Dharamsala, the northern Indian hilltop base of the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, witnesses said.

The Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), which sponsored the marathon hunger strike, said an estimated 5,000 people including Buddhist monks, Tibetan women and children were marching on the streets of Dharamsala.

"They are shouting anti-Chinese slogans and demanding immediate U.N. intervention in Tibet," said TYC leader Pemba Lundrup from Dharamsala, which is also the headquarters of the Tibetan government-in-exile.

"Several protesters have fainted... But so far there has been no violence," he said, adding the protests began during the funeral of the 30-year-old Ngodub.

The TYC, which opposes the Dalai Lama's non-violent struggle for Tibet's freedom, said a memorial would be built for Ngodub, a former soldier of a Tibetan unit of the Indian army.

Ngodub is the first Tibetan to immolate himself in protest against China's 1951 occupation of Tibet.

Mr. Lundrup said all Tibetan-owned business establishments, schools and colleges remained closed Friday in

Dharamsala, which is also a popular tourist spot in India.

The TYC, meanwhile, rejected appeals of the Tibetan government to end the Delhi hunger strike.

"There is no question of calling off the hunger strike at this juncture," said a spokesman of the 10,000-member TYC in the Indian capital.

He said the hunger strike, which began on March 10, would continue at an old observatory in New Delhi.

T.C. Teshong, information minister in the Tibetan government-in-exile, appealed Thursday for the TYC to call off the hunger strike.

Mr. Teshong said an aggressive anti-China campaign by the TYC could turn the international community away from the non-violent independence struggle.

"The sympathy and support of the international community is with us because of the Dalai Lama's non-violent struggle, which we do not want to see frittered away," he said.

Ngodub set himself on fire Monday when the police dragged away three hunger strikers to a hospital. In a previous action last Sunday, three protesters were removed from the observatory.

Five Tibetans took up the disrupted hunger strike.

Chinese troops invaded Tibet in 1951. The Dalai Lama and some 100,000 Tibetans fled to India after Beijing crushed an anti-Chinese uprising in Tibet in 1959.

The Dalai Lama, who is currently in the United States, while speaking to a New York audience said Thursday that he should not carry any animosity towards the Chinese.

Danish premier presses for yes vote on Amsterdam Treaty

COPENHAGEN (AFP) — Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen Friday urged a "yes" vote in a coming referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty, amid signs that public support is waning because of labour unrest.

In a May Day address in the city of Ballerup, just west of Copenhagen, Mr. Rasmussen stressed that the new EU treaty was "fundamental to the future of Denmark" in Europe.

A "no" vote in the May 28 referendum would sink the country "into a well of uncertainty," while support for the treaty, which aims to reform the European Union and open the road to EU enlargement, would be a "statement of confidence" in Denmark's development, he said.

"If the people firmly back the government in the referendum, I promise that we will continue to fight for Danish interests."

The Treaty of Amsterdam is better than Maastricht, because it will allow us to solve common problems and dangers that no country can face alone," Mr. Rasmussen said, citing the problems of organised crime and drug trafficking.

Danes rejected the Maastricht Treaty in June 1992, but secured four exemptions at the Edinburgh summit of December 1992.

The exemptions allow it to stay out of EU's single currency, joint defence and judicial policies, and European citizenship, and enabled the treaty to be approved in a second referendum in May 1993.

A survey published Friday in the economic daily Boersson showed support for the Amsterdam Treaty had dropped in April, apparently bearing out government fears that labour unrest could breed anti-European sentiment.

The survey of 1,182 people showed support for the treaty at 42 per cent, down 4.6 percentage points from the previous month.

Opposition to the agreement was up 3.4 percentage points at 34.3 per cent.

The survey was carried out April 27-29, coinciding with the first three days of a massive private sector strike — marking Denmark's first case of industrial action in 13 years.

Half a million private sector workers demanding a sixth week of salaried vacation and wage hikes went on strike or were locked out of their jobs Monday in the transport, construction, manufacturing and service sectors.

The latest survey showed that workers were responsible for the growing opposition to the new treaty.

Only 29.31 per cent of workers surveyed said they would back the agreement, compared to 42.72 per cent in March.

Danish unions and employers began talks Thursday in a bid to thrash out an agreement to end the private sector stoppage before the government decides to intervene.

Japan's coalition may disband

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's Socialists are preparing to quit the ruling three-party coalition led by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), news reports said Friday.

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) plans to leave the coalition anytime from June because of a disputes over anti-corruption and defence policies, news agencies and major newspapers reported.

SDP leaders made the decision at a Tokyo meeting Wednesday, according to the reports. New Party Sakigake may also leave the coalition if the Socialists break away, its leader Masayoshi Takemura said.

The LDP formed the unholy left-right alliance in June 1994 with the SDP and Sakigake.

The SDP is seeking left-wing support ahead of upper house elections in July. But Mr. Hashimoto's popularity has slumped because of the nation's economic slump.

A SDP senior official was quoted by the Asahi Shimbun as saying that "it is too late if we leave the coalition at the end of the plenary session" of parliament, which is scheduled to end in July.

Another senior official was quoted by Jiji Press as saying: "Senior party officials are all agreed. We have decided our choice."

Immediate confirmation of the reports by senior SDP officials was not available, but a party spokesman said the reports were "totally wrong."

"The executive meeting was held late Wednesday but they reached no such decision," the spokesman said.

Sakigake leader Takemura, a former finance minister, said "The coalition is formed by the three parties. We

have said the coalition would disband even if only one of the three parties leaves the government."

A Socialist pullout could be a blow to Mr. Hashimoto.

His LDP needs backing from the two smaller parties in the House of Councillors, where it controls 118 seats out of 252. The SDP has 20 seats and Sakigake three in the upper chamber.

The conservative party has a majority in the 500-strong lower house with 261 seats.

The LDP upset the SDP's pacifist sentiments by signing an accord with the United States to expand defence cooperation beyond its territory to cope with any future regional conflicts.

While signing the logistical support agreement Tuesday, the government sent three bills to parliament to legalise the move.

The support includes the supply of fuel and the transport of soldiers for U.S. forces in "areas surrounding Japan" when the country's peace and security is threatened.

SDP leader Takako Doi has previously hinted at her party's departure from the alliance. "Reliable relations among the three parties have faded," Mrs. Doi said. "We have to make an unavoidable decision."

Former Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama of the SDP also said: "We have to consider anti-LDP sentiments held by our local support groups ahead of upper house elections."

The SDP and the Sakigake have demanded stricter legislative control over political donations. But parliament is unlikely to enact an anti-corruption bill during the current session.

Serbs poised to ethnic Albanians outlaw areas

PRISTINA (AFP) — Serbian police and army forces appear poised to deal with the Kosovo crisis by blocking out of the southern part of the province of Kosovo officials and diplomats and Reuters this week.

"The international community has been asked to withdraw its forces from Kosovo," a Serbian official said.

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'Foundation of justice will ensure solid peace treaty'

Following is the full text of Her Majesty Queen Noor's address to the Middle East Youth Summit in Villars, Switzerland.

OVER THE past several years, I have been privileged to participate in many gatherings such as this — gatherings that fill me with the hope and expectation that peace, justice and security can prevail in the Middle East. The convergence I see here of the spirit of youth and the will to make peace is doubly encouraging, because it is actively supported by so many others from around the world who share our goals and our determination to succeed.

In that light, I would like to thank all those who have made this summit possible. The entire Seeds of Peace programme, and especially John and Janet Wallach; the Noyaris Company for sponsoring this event; and the Swiss government for hosting it, in this beautiful country that has become home to so many international peace-making and humanitarian initiatives.

Today, many around the world and within our region question the very existence of a peace process. Looking at you, however, I see ample reason for renewed hope because the obstacles to peace are the result of human decisions and action, not destiny, and they can be overcome by the determined efforts of individuals.

This summit of young peace-seeking Arabs and Israelis reminds us that lasting peace is made not only between governments, but more importantly, between people. Events of the past two years have produced serious contradictions between the policies of governments and the hopes and dreams of the people they govern.

We have seen the promising and tangible progress that followed the 1991 Madrid conference eroded by political forces manipulating people's insecurities and often legitimate concerns into destructive intransigence. Face-to-face dialogue therefore becomes all the more crucial for understanding the reasons for the stalemate and for identifying how we can revive the peace process and bring it to a successful conclusion. You, and others like you, who see a balanced and just peace as the only realistic and responsible way forward, must find their voice and demand that their governments live up to their commitments and responsibilities.

From the road you have travelled together, you provide an example that could help us negotiate the obstacles that still stand in the way of a comprehensive peace. As Seeds of Peace, you have overcome the political divide and emotional traumas of our shared history and forged meaningful friendships that have allowed you to understand and even transcend your differences.

For all the people of the Middle East to enjoy the same mutual understanding, respect and friendship that define your relationships with one another, we must first of all obtain the facts we need to understand the many issues in this complex conflict. Only through a careful examination of events can we separate truth from disinformation and distortion. We must then approach that truth with the kind of tolerance that can only be gained face to face. Your experience is an encouraging example of this crucial synthesis of objectivity and empathy.

It is this synthesis that will enable you to achieve the goal you have set yourselves, as you work together this week to craft a credible peace treaty for the Middle East. In this

pursuit of objectivity and empathy — and fully aware of the risk I am taking in sounding too much like one of your teachers — I would like to propose some lessons to be gained from recent examples of regional and international conflict resolution.

Many of the world's most intransigent conflicts demonstrate that peace and stability are more likely to be achieved through dialogue than through threats and the use of force. After decades of strife, the Vietnam war finally came to an end around a conference table in Paris. The abolition of apartheid and the new South Africa could begin only when F.W. de Klerk came to see Nelson Mandela in his jail cell. The United Nations' secretary general's recent initiative in Iraq, supported by regional and international leaders, demonstrated the power of diplomacy and persuasion over military build-up and threats of punitive action.

Similarly encouraging, is the recent breakthrough for peace in northern Ireland. We pray that in the May 22 referendum on the Stormont agreement, the people of northern Ireland and the Irish Republic will vote to end almost 30 years of hostility. The world will be watching and hoping that the agreement will be supported by the different factions in a conflict that has claimed thousands of lives.

We, in the Middle East especially, wish them well, for we know perhaps better than anyone, that a just peace after generations of suffering requires not only will, but also good faith, compromise, and sacrifice.

Communication is the best tool and, really a pre-condition for conflict-resolution. But meaningful communication does not mean sitting together at the negotiating table with opposing and inflexible demands. It requires listening to one's opponents' concerns, and being willing to reach a mutually acceptable compromise.

Keeping channels open at all times is critical, even while confrontations are taking place on the ground. In armed conflict there is no room for compromise, but face-to-face dialogue creates openings for cooperation that are unavailable on the field of battle. The weak can negotiate with the strong, and sometimes both can come away rewarded. Such resolute communication can lead to an empathetic understanding that can overcome even the most serious setbacks.

But it is crucial to remember that empathy is not emotionalism. As you, especially, are aware, we must resist the tendency of politicians and the media to portray our world in superficial, one-dimensional terms, and black-and-white reporting of issues.

The controversial Israeli television documentary series "Tkuma" ("Rebirth") about the country's first 50 years, has challenged the traditional Zionist tale of heroic return and nation-building in an empty, desolate homeland, by incorporating Palestinian, and Sephardic Jewish perspectives on the history of the state. "Tkuma" represents a new process of unprecedented objectivity and honest soul-searching on all sides that might just break through the myths and stereotypes that, over the years, have obstructed genuine understanding.

Rather than sensationalising violence and dwelling on personalities and emotions, it is also more productive to focus on policies and legal rights, obligations and international law.

Here, I would emphasise the constructive role that can be,

played by the United Nations, which was established after World War II to protect future generations from the scourge of war and to promote world peace and security. Given the opportunity, the United Nations as an impartial body, can help prevent and resolve conflicts by giving due consideration to the legal claims of all concerned parties.

In order for the United Nations to fulfil its mission as a credible peace-maker, it's member states must implement its decisions in all parts of the world with equal determination.

Israel based its declaration of independence 50 years ago on United Nations General Assembly resolution 181. It is only appropriate that we all should work to implement the subsequent United Nations Security Council resolutions that constitute the framework for today's peace process.

Now, I would urge you to apply these lessons to the peace treaty you are crafting to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The peace you build must be one that you can live with in your own lifetimes and that will also satisfy your children. I urge you to draw up a treaty that honours the best that is within us — a treaty that is compelling and acceptable to all concerned because it treats them all with equal dignity, validity and rights.

You must build your peace treaty on a foundation of justice by ensuring the full human and national rights of all sides. More specifically, we hope that your treaty will affirm that the peoples of the Middle East have an equal right to sovereignty, security, stability and progress. All the parties to the conflict must be able to live in viable states — or the structure of the peace we seek to build will collapse.

One reason the peace process is stalled is that the Palestinian people are being forced to live in an odd patchwork of disconnected land units in which they can exercise only partial rights. This contradicts the principal framework for today's peace-makers: United Nations Security Council decisions 242, 338, and 425, requiring Israel to withdraw from all occupied territories, as well as the principle of self-determination and statehood for both Israelis and Palestinians.

We also hope that your peace treaty will recognise that an essential but often forgotten component of this conflict remains the continued injustice towards the millions of Palestinian refugees throughout the region and elsewhere in the world. These are not statistics; these are men, women and children who wake up every day to face the rigours of life without the most basic rights that most of us take for granted — the right to a nationality, a passport, an identity, a state, to live in their own Ancestral Homeland, to travel freely, to work legally, to receive medical care and schooling, and, ultimately, to return to their homes or be compensated for their losses.

Your peace treaty must also provide a solution to the hundreds of illegal settlements and colonies on occupied Arab lands. Far from achieving security, settlements have only rekindled violence.

Your treaty must recognise the right of both Palestinians and Israelis to accommodate their population expansion, religious expression, and national identity — but only within their legal, internationally recognised borders — not on lands occupied in war.

Many injustices in our region have been perpetuated in the name of "security." But genuine security can only be

achieved in the hearts of people through confidence and trust — true security exists in a state of mind, not a state of occupation. Violence takes root in people who feel pushed to extremes, hopeless, disenfranchised, and no amount of buffer zones, border checks or crackdowns can provide full security against it. Our challenge together is to define a new concept of security, a new, flexible armour that is based on equal and mutual rights, not on force of arms or occupation of land. The security we all require must stem from everyone in the conflict feeling that their rights have been achieved, their material needs addressed, their physical protection assured, and their very humanity affirmed.

Finally, we hope that your peace treaty will transform Jerusalem from a bitter microcosm of the Arab-Israeli conflict into its rightful role as a symbol of our capacity to live together on common ground, both literal and moral. Jerusalem cannot be a city of God's peace if it is also a city of checkpoints with armed soldiers, of bombs on buses and in shopping malls, of humiliating travel passes, of vast inequities in social services, of destruction and confiscation of homes and lands, and of illegal revocation of residency permits for families who have lived there for hundreds of years.

Everything about Jerusalem — the architecture, the spirituality, the history, and the bustling humanity of its streets and souqs — speaks to us of a city belonging to many people, to multiple faiths, to several nationalities, and to all humankind. This is the holy city dear to all of us. Help us to turn this ideal Jerusalem from symbol into fact.

A just and lasting peace between Arabs and Israelis needs the input and participation of all its citizens, young and old. You, the Seeds of Peace, have it within you to inspire our region's political leaders to find the middle ground that has eluded them for so long — the middle ground where honourable compromise coexists with equal rights for all.

Do not underestimate the impact that you can have on your elders, on your leaders, and on your countries. I myself can vouch for the powerful effect you've had on at least one head of state: you are constantly in the speeches — and never far from the heart — of my husband King Hussein as an example of the power of communication, perseverance, and good will. You, perhaps more than anyone, give us hope that this process will succeed.

Your peace treaty can provide a model for diplomatic efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Your presence here together proves that the most basic human contact — sharing perspectives, calmly airing feelings of conflict — can remarkably quickly produce common ground and a commitment to live together in mutual respect. Although some of you may not be old enough to vote, you can do something the most powerful political leaders cannot — by sitting together and talking, you can realise the future we all hope for.

Do your work well. It is you who have the most to gain. The generation now in power began this process, but it is you who will complete it, enshallah, and you and your children who will benefit from it. One day, those children may look back and thank you for what you did in your youth, back in the old millennium, in your grand experiment for peace, justice and humanity in the Middle East.

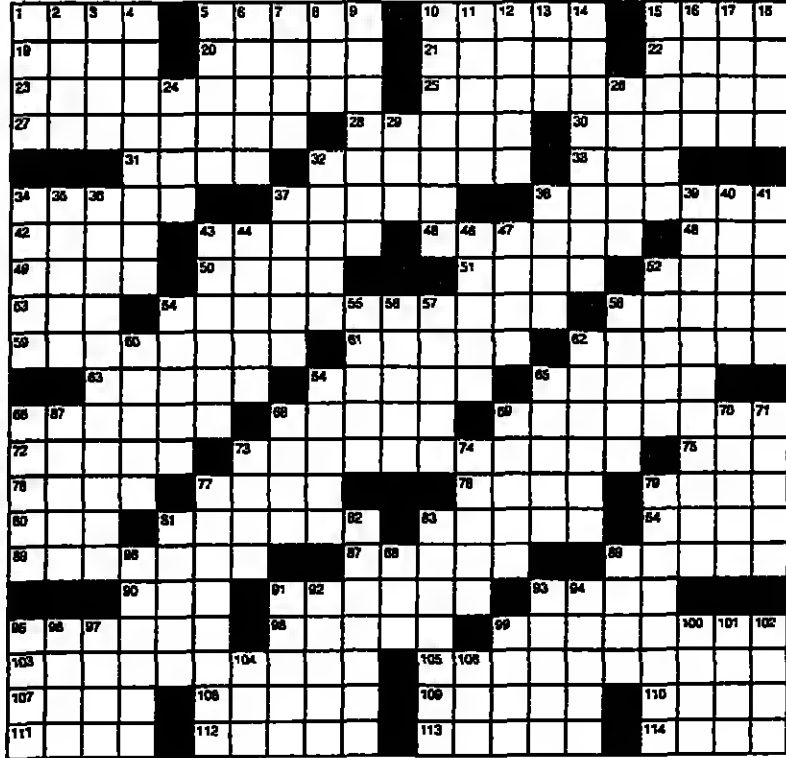
May God grant you success in this and all your future endeavours.

The Saturday Crossword

QUESTIONNAIRE

By Harvey L. Chew, Danvers, Massachusetts

- ACROSS**
1. Velvety plant
 5. Amazing woman
 10. Sovereign
 15. Indigo dye
 16. Dog in "The Thin Man"
 20. Enticed
 21. French school
 22. Half of a golf course
 23. Bugs' question
 24. Patron's question
 27. Cattleman
 28. Cousin of "ID"
 30. Send back to the
 31. Rescuer
 32. Tibetans and
 33. Swiss river
 34. Single
 37. Indignant winter weather
 38. Loose and illegible signatures
 42. Sci-fi author of "Naked Lunch"
 43. Distant Nn
 45. Nursery rhyme
 46. Jack and spouse
 48. In what way?
 49. Paid players
 50. "In the Attic"
 51. Attire's crowd
 52. Manufactured
 53. Twisting turn
 54. Dante's question
 55. Fully full
 56. After again
 61. Occurrence
 62. Pilgrim's destination
 63. Backs of necks



- DOWN**
1. Bryn... College
 2. Workplace
 3. Comic Laurei
 4. Tote bags
 5. Pesto-up artist
 6. Publishable copy
 7. Arroz
 8. Dove's cry
 9. Contains in a box
 10. Use a microwave
 11. Sch. in Storm, CT
 12. Edmund and Rob
 13. Trains on trestles
 14. Eats one's words
 15. "Pier Gyn"
 16. Considerate
 17. Writing fluids
 18. "... we forget..."
 24. Lean-to
 25. Brings up
 26. Camille's parody
 27. Social category
 34. Higher one of two
 35. Scandinavian
 36. Costello's question
 37. Spoken biblically
 38. Without Fr.
 39. Pile's question
 40. Waterproof wool
 41. Edberg or Borg

- 42. Following close behind**
43. High times
 44. Counterfeit
 45. Iron code
 46. Gms
 47. Windshield cleaner
 48. Valentine shape
 49. Bad deeds
 50. Brazilian port
 51. East a shadow
 52. Johnson, the Olympic runner
 53. Act parts
 54. Country singer
 55. Get up
 56. Custer reaches
 57. Tehran resident
 58. Collins or Donahue
 59. "Crazy" singer
 60. Highly unconventional
 61. Patch roads
 62. Violent conflicts
 63. Not old enough
 64. Worked in the yard
 65. More sparsely distributed
 66. Silt formation

Last Sunday's Crossword Solved

DOWN: 1. Bryn... College; 2. Workplace; 3. Comic Laurei; 4. Tote bags; 5. Pesto-up artist; 6. Publishable copy; 7. Arroz; 8. Dove's cry; 9. Contains in a box; 10. Use a microwave; 11. Sch. in Storm, CT; 12. Edmund and Rob; 13. Trains on trestles; 14. Eats one's words; 15. "Pier Gyn"; 16. Considerate; 17. Writing fluids; 18. "... we forget..."; 24. Lean-to; 25. Brings up; 26. Camille's parody; 27. Social category; 34. Higher one of two; 35. Scandinavian; 36. Costello's question; 37. Spoken biblically; 38. Without Fr.; 39. Pile's question; 40. Waterproof wool; 41. Edberg or Borg.

'A stranger in a strange land' BOOK REVIEW

The Other Place
By Ibrahim Abdel Meguid
The American University in Cairo Press,
1997, 299 pages

WINNER OF the 1996 Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature, *The Other Place* is the first work of Egyptian writer Ibrahim Abdel Meguid to be translated into English. Originally published in 1991 as *al-Balad al-ukhra*, this novel intersects with Naguib Mahfouz in other ways as well. The protagonist Ismail, a teacher from Alexandria, Egypt, who goes to work for a company in Saudi Arabia, identifies with Ahmad Akif from Mahfouz's novel *Khan al-Khalili*. As a youth on a school trip to Cairo, Ismail had escaped from the group to haunt Bayn al-Qasrayn St. and Midq Alley, in search of the characters whom Mahfouz brought to life in novels of the same names. Onak Ismail read voraciously and even aspired to write himself, but upon arriving in Saudi Arabia all such endeavours withered away in the heat of the race for the petrodollar.

The novel is set in 1978-9, the period when the Shah fled Iran, Bhutto was executed in Pakistan, and the Egyptian-Israeli treaty was signed. Obviously, it was not by chance that Abdel Meguid chose this as the backdrop of his novel, for it was a time of change and crisis. Yet these overarching events enter into the story only randomly when Ismail tunes in the radio or reads the newspapers, for they are but the headlines of a deeper and more universal crisis. The real themes of the novel are the sterility of everyday life in the business world, the loss of meaning and values in human interactions, corruption, alienation and exile. Yet there are no "grand narratives" on these themes. The plot simply follows Ismail's experiences as "a stranger in a strange land" (p. 277).

Abdel Meguid's style is deceptively simple. At first, it seems that Ismail is only telling in diary form what happens to him from the day of his arrival in Tabuk: "The door of the plane opened and I saw the silence" — so that story begins. But the author's subtle use of imagery — seeing rather than hearing the silence — builds up to a sophisticated symbolism in Ismail's internal dialogue with his surroundings. The narrative vacillates between mundane details, like what Ismail eats for breakfast, and his increasingly introspective and hallucinatory dreams and thoughts. Semi-surreal impressions are created as Ismail finds himself involved in bizarre events whose root causes are corruption, repressive norms and stifled frustrations. Human emotions find unexpected outlets "in a country where the very air reports tender feelings to the police" (p. 175), and where "time does not pass though lifetimes are stolen" (p. 250).

This is not a simple story of a homesick Egyptian. Ismail's observations reflect great sensitivity to the situation of women and other workers, including the many Asians, around him. He is caught between his feelings of responsibility towards others and his pledge to himself "not to be a part of anything, to be like a shiny smooth mirror off which raindrops slide" (p. 48). The result is behaviour which swings between silence and inertia on the one hand, and impulsive, unplanned actions that lead nowhere on the other. After a few months at his new work-



Ibrahim Abdel Meguid THE OTHER PLACE

place, Ismail concludes in an imagined letter to Egypt: "I am not coming back and I am not staying here. I am going to explode" (p. 95).

In *The Other Place*, Ibrahim Abdel Meguid succeeds in credibly depicting a very specific situation — typical of the experience of many Arabs who have immigrated for work — within a universal idiom. This makes his book a meaningful contribution to the development of the modern Arab novel, with international appeal.

Sally Bland

Euro 11 is 'the world's greatest trading power'—Eurostat

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The 11 countries expected to be formally endorsed as founder members of the European single currency will join forces to create "the world's greatest trading power", Eurostat said Friday.

Exports from the Euro 11 countries were 25 per cent higher than U.S. exports last year, Eurostat said. Euro 11 exports accounted for 20 per cent of world exports, compared with a 16 per cent share for U.S. exports and 16 per cent for Japan.

"As the European Union is traditionally orientated to external relations, the EMU (European monetary union) remains, even if it is only made up of 11 out of the 15 member states, the biggest commercial power in the world," Eurostat said in a statement.

Gross domestic product (GDP) of the euro zone was 5,546 billion ECU (\$6,090 billion) in 1997, compared with 6,848 billion ECU (European Currency Unit) in the United States and 3,712 billion ECU in Japan.

On a global comparison, both euro countries and the United States had a slice of world income equal to about 18 per cent of world GDP (gross domestic product), Eurostat said.

The euro 11 will have a total population of 291 million people, compared with 269 million in the United States and 126 million in Japan.

Growth in the United States was far higher than in Europe last year. The U.S. economy grew by 3.8 per cent in 1997, compared with 2.5 per cent in the euro zone and 0.9 per cent in Japan.

The service sector here dominates the economy, but European industry nonetheless makes a greater contribution to GDP in percentage terms than in the United States.

Services generated 67.9 per cent of GDP in the euro 11 group, compared with 72.6 per cent of GDP in the United States and 61.7 per cent in Japan, according to Eurostat.

Average unemployment at the end of 1997 was far higher in Europe, at 11.5

per cent, than in the United States, where unemployment was 4.7 per cent of the active population and in Japan, where joblessness stood at 3.5 per cent.

Wages, meanwhile, were higher here than in either the United States or Japan. Average hourly labour costs in the euro 11 group were 22 ECU in 1996, compared with 17 ECU in the United States and 20 ECU in Japan.

With Britain, which is home to Europe's dominant stock exchange, not expected to join economic and monetary union (EMU) until 2002 at the earliest, Eurostat said that the size of the euro 11 stock market "even though important, is smaller than Japan's and only represents a third of the one in the United States."

Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Finland are expected to be formally named as founder members of EMU at a historic summit here.

Lebanon raises import duties to cover pay rises

BEIRUT (R) — The Lebanese cabinet has slapped a two percentage point increase in customs duties on all imports to finance long-delayed public sector pay rises, a government minister has said.

Duties on cigarettes will rise by 10 percentage points.

"These increases will be implemented as of midnight Friday-Saturday, April 24-25," Information Minister Bassam Sabaa told reporters.

The higher duties will affect all imports including petrol, industrial raw materials and machinery, Mr. Sabaa said. "All imports means all imports. The decision is clear."

Mr. Sabaa did not give a specific figure for projected extra revenues from the increase.

He said the returns would be used to cover the proposed pay increase to public employees from 1999.

"As of Jan. 1, 1999, salaries will be paid according to the new pay scale which will be handed over to parliament next week," Mr. Sabaa said.

An official source told Reuters that the pay increases for more than 150,000 government employees and civil servants would cost the government an extra 400 billion Lebanese pounds (\$62.3 million) a year.

An economist, Kamal Hamdan, told Al Nahar newspaper earlier that he estimated the cost at \$400 million a year, of which he said the tariff rises would cover about a third.

The government has been delaying adjustments in the public pay scale, promised since 1996, for lack of funds, Mr. Sabaa said. He planned a separate bill awarding retroactive salary increases for the past three years.

"The amounts due for 1996, 1997, 1998 will be

paid after securing necessary financing. These will be determined and submitted to parliament in a separate bill," Mr. Sabaa said.

He did not elaborate on potential sources to fund the retroactive rises, but said they would apply to public sector employees who retired in the last three years.

Al Nahar said the decision meant that the new bill would be implemented by the new government, to be formed after presidential elections due in November.

Jack Sarraf, head of the Association of Lebanese Industrialists, told the newspaper: "This decision poses more obstacles in the face of industry and its competitive ability abroad."

"Customs duties on imported materials have been previously raised from two to four per cent and now it has become six per cent," he added.

Tobacco tariffs boost income of Arab Gulf states but demand expected to remain high

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A sharp increase in customs tariffs on cigarette and tobacco imports by Arab Gulf states is set to boost their non-oil income but will probably not cut consumption, economists and dealers said Friday.

Duties on tobacco imports were raised from 50 per cent to 70 per cent by the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries last month and are set to increase to 80 per cent in July 1998, 90 per cent a year later and 100 per cent in 2000.

Initially, duties on GCC tobacco imports were 20 per cent. They were raised to 30 per cent 10 years ago before being hiked to 50 per cent and lifted again in April.

The increase was decided by the GCC governments under their 1983 agreement to unify their customs tariffs and merge their economies.

The decision also aims to cut GCC cigarette consumption, which is among the highest in the world.

"Of course, such a rise will largely boost their tax revenues as imports are steadily growing," a United Arab Emirates (UAE) cigarette dealer said.

"I don't think it will have any impact on consumption, which I expect to continue growing. Cigarette and tobacco prices have nearly doubled over the past years and demand is still strong," he added.

"I think this is because of the high income in this region and its social and demographic structure," the dealer explained.

Dealers estimated that GCC countries import nearly 30 billion cigarettes a

year, worth more than \$800 million.

By 2000, their revenues from duties on cigarettes and tobacco could exceed \$1 billion compared with less than \$100 million in the mid-1980s.

"It is a high figure considering the relatively low GCC income from taxes and other non-oil sectors," a Gulf economic expert said.

Such revenues are badly needed at a time when oil prices are low and the six members are suffering from persistent deficits in their budgets.

GCC states — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE — depend heavily on oil export earnings, which account for more than two thirds of their total income.

Weak crude prices have slashed their annual income to around \$70 billion, nearly a third of their earnings during the oil boom.

The tobacco tax will account for more than eight per cent of their non-oil earnings, projected at \$12 billion in 2000, and over 20 per cent of their total customs revenues, according to economists.

Industrial exports are now the main component of their non-oil revenues, which also cover farm sales, tariffs on selective products and fees on services to the public.

The six members have been urged by the International Monetary Fund and regional officials and experts to develop their taxation system and gradually dismantle heavy subsidies to offset volatile oil earnings.

Dealers said high income in the GCC and the presence of what they call "for-

sign smoking communities" have boosted cigarette consumption in the 17-year-old Gulf alliance to one of the world's highest levels.

They cited such heavy smokers as non-Gulf Arabs, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Iranians and expatriates from other Asian countries.

Such communities comprise more than a third of the GCC's population of around 22 million and over two thirds of the people of the UAE, Qatar and Kuwait.

Apart from hiking taxes and prices, GCC states have also launched campaigns warning against smoking hazards. They include lectures and seminars, TV documentaries and warning tags on the cigarette packets.

"Such campaigns have not had a real effect on consumption. The problem is that many people are not educated while others just simply don't care," a dealer said. "I am sure most of them do not even look at the warning tag."

"There is another important factor," another dealer said. "A large number of the expatriates in the region say they smoke to kill time and tackle the stress of being away from home for a long time."

GCC states control nearly 45 per cent of the world's recoverable oil resources and produce more than a quarter of the global crude supplies.

Annual per capita income in some GCC members has remained above \$16,000 over the past decade, one of the highest income levels in the world.

Yemen's trade soars 39 per cent to \$4 billion in 1997

SANAA (AFP) — Yemen's foreign trade reached \$4.1 billion last year, a rise of 39 per cent over 1996, the official Saba agency has reported.

Yemeni imports, exports and reexports reached \$2.9 billion in 1996, according to the agency.

The Yemeni trade balance showed a surplus

in 1997 for the third year running, rising 53 per cent to \$618 million from \$403 million in 1996.

Oil and oil products led exports, followed by foodstuffs, according to Saba, which did not specify which countries were Yemen's leading trade partners.

Yemen, one of the world's least developed countries, has increased agreements with foreign companies in recent years to boost its oil and gas production and earn more hard currency.

The country has produced crude oil at the rate of 380,000 barrels per day since the start of this year.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, MAY 2, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Pack up a bunch of stuff and head for the wide open spaces. If you've got a favourite place you like to go, and a favourite person you like to go with, that's definitely the best idea yet. If you can only have one of the above, make it a new person and favourite old location.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Looks like you could have company this weekend. That's OK. Your place is a haven of comfort and security for lots of your friends. That's just the way you like it. You go to a deal of trouble to make sure that happens. Everybody loves your home-made treats.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Dive into a good book this weekend. If you start today, you may not want to come out until Sunday night. You could learn a lot and have a marvellous time. There may be a couple of other things you have to take care of, too. Get them done quickly, or get somebody else to do them.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) It looks like something valuable is coming from far away. It looks like a gift, but it looks more like payment for work done in the past. The bad news is that there may be money complications tonight. If you're going out, keep your wallet in a safe place.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Somebody who loves you very much is making quite a fuss. What's the best thing to do in a situation like this? Well, obviously, it's to make a big fuss back. If you get yourself a good mutual admiration society going, you'll know what it is to be blessed.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This would be a good time to have people over to your house. You may be thinking that the place is a mess, but they won't mind. Or you could turn the place into a mess with their help, as part of a plan to get it looking even better. Get them to help you paint the kitchen!

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Your team is red hot. You're full of vitality and vigour. You might be the cheerleader rather than one of the players. You naturally spur others on to success. You're an excellent motivator as well as an excellent manager. So go for the gold!

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Are you running a marathon, or what? If so, you'll need strength and endurance. You may not have much energy left for going out tonight, however. That could cause a problem with your mate. It looks like he or she wants to party and you want to sleep. Compromise. First one, then the other.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) At last, a day when you can run and play and frolic in the flowers. After you've finished your chores, that is. If you let your fingers do the walking, you'll save yourself a lot of time. And the more time you save, the sooner you can get out there on the playing field.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) There are still items on your list that you haven't been able to afford. One of them is something you want very much, and another is something your sweetheart or children desire. Whoever got the last treat has to wait; the other one gets the treat this time.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is going to be a little bit easier. It looks like you've got a partner who can help. This person is also going to bring in a little more money. That's certainly welcome. Also, a friend comes up with a great idea this afternoon. Let people know what you need.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) The last few days at work have been pretty peaceful. Now that the weekend is here, it's time to get busy. You may be involved in a project that's helping a friend, but it looks like there's money coming in, too. You're concerned about serving others, and that serves you as well.

Birthstone of May: Emerald — Citrine

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Push and shove
- Popeye's ...
- Pea
- More
- Bohemian
- Senator
- Cochran of Mississippi
- Nabokov novel
- Cheese gadget
- Atmospheric whitecaps?
- Colorful joints?
- Main dish
- Band of hoods
- Puts on
- Perry Mason's Street
- Components of everything
- Examples in context
- Constitution
- Punster
- Phone co.
- Antenna
- Like one blood product
- California tort
- Roundball
- Letters
- Takes a walk
- Rare
- Inch sideways
- Use a blender
- Comic Sahl
- Back of car?
- Striped
- chalcidomy
- Perfect
- Blaring loofer?
- Theater?
- Turns inside out
- Functional quill
- Tulip-to-be
- Lady of Spain
- Madison Ave. output
- Angry states
- Worn away

DOWN

- Toothlike projection
- Bobby of the NHL
- Hotshot plank?
- Yugoslavian dictator
- Wine sediment
- Gooted
- Laundry woes
- Playing madman?
- Jug handles
- 3rd son of Elizabeth
- "Solent" composer
- Perfect
- Fettuccine, e.g.
- Iowa college town
- Customary time
- Portuguese enclave in China
- Tryon novel (with "The")
- Discourages
- Medical pic
- Battling posture
- Essence
- Isle of exile
- Fancy fishing pole?
- Vell material
- Ruhr valley city
- King of France
- Shirt opening
- Withered
- Lolla-lesh
- Blood-let developer
- Daddy
- Leadcrass
- Actresses Irene and Meg
- "We hold ... truths to be ..."
- Go off, as milk
- Finished
- Nevada city
- Baseball stat.
- Three in Italy
- Fortom

Peanuts

SO THE FAMILY GOES INTO THE MALL, AND I'M LEFT ALONE IN THE CAR...

HERE'S THE WORLD FAMOUS BIG-RIG OPERATOR TOOLING HIS WAY TOWARD OMAHA...

ONE MINUTE HERE WHILE WE TAKE THE MAP OUT OF THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT...

ONE MINUTE HERE WHILE WE TRY TO GET THE MAP BACK INTO THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT...

Andy Capp

I FINALLY FOUND THE RIGHT COLOR CURTAINS FOR THE BEDROOM, PET!

THEY WERE REDUCED IN PRICE, BUT THEY STILL TOOK EVERY PENNY I HAD

PHIEW! MAKE ME A CUP OF TEA, PET! I THINK I'VE EARNED IT

THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL A GOOD DAY'S WORK—SPENDING A WHOLE WEEK'S PAY

Mutt'n'Jeff

I DON'T NEED ANY HELP! BUSINESS SAYS I CAN DO IT MYSELF!

LISTEN, I DON'T WANT A JOB AND I'D DOUBLE MY BUSINESS!

WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT? SHAVING SOAP IS USED FOR... DON'T YOU?

SURE! TO SHAKE OFF THE HAIR!

AND YOU KNOW WHAT? HAIR RESTORER IS USED FOR... DON'T YOU?

SURE! TO MAKE THE HAIR GROW!

WELL, I'LL MIX MY HAIR RESTORER IN YOUR SHAVING SOAP—WETTER?

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

"Today the easy-listening station gave me a headache. I am officially OLD."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

GOEBT

DEWPI

FATSIE

NALDIN

Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: LLAMA GLADE BELFRY GOLFER
Answer: Living near a garage dump can be this — OFFAL BAD

Daily

A review of news

Arab Potash Co drop in ne

THE JORDANIAN Potash Company (JPC) reported a 22 per cent drop in its net profit for the first quarter of 1998, compared with the same period last year.

The JPC's net profit for the first quarter of 1998 was \$1.1 million, compared with \$1.4 million in the same period last year.

The company's revenue for the first quarter of 1998 was \$1.4 million, compared with \$1.6 million in the same period last year.

The JPC's revenue for the first quarter of 1998 was \$1.4 million, compared with \$1.6 million in the same period last year.

REUTERS The Business

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP
US Dollar	1.7772	0.5988	
DE Mark	0.5627	0.5388	
GB Sterling	1.8700	2.9689	
CH Franc	0.5723	119.48	0.4082
JP Yen	0.0075	1.3347	0.4485
CA Dollar	0.8977	1.2918	0.4222
IL Lira	0.0008	1.0116	0.3498
NL Guilder	0.4997	0.879	0.2988
FR Franc	0.1678	0.2980	0.1063

Middle East

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR
US Dollar	0.7090	3.7902	
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	0.2694	
Saudi Riyal	0.2667	0.1891	
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8908	0.9482
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0362
Kuwait Dinar	0.2703	0.2357	1.2301
UAE Dirham	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211
Lebanese L1000	0.66	0.4679	2.4760
Egyptian	0.2939	0.2084	1.1032

Energy

Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	14.61	13.88
WTI	16.20	15.52
WTI	14.61	13.88
WTI	12.90	12.48
WTI	157.00	155.00

Commodities

Commodity	Price
SA Riyal	0.2667
AE Dirham	0.1891
KW Dirham	0.9482
BH Dirham	1.0362
CY Pound	1.2301

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	306.1	308.6
Silver (oz's)	6.22	6.25
Platinum (oz's)	395.1	397.1
14 (3 Months)	1437	1439
18 (3 Months)	1855	1857
22 (3 Months)	1109	1110
24 (3 Months)	560	562
26 (3 Months)	5580	5590

Main Equity Index

Bourse	Index	Value
New York	DOW JONES	3082.02
New York	S&P 500	1114.88
London	FT-SE 100	5019.3
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	15601.1
Paris	CAC 40	3880.92
Frankfurt	DAX	5107.44

JORDAN M

DAJA

STUDIO

Professional

1 hour

Develop your

at our shop and

JUMBO ph

30% larger

Free

20 x 30 cm

Shmelsen

Grindlays

Phone 56

Sweish Tel

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Arab Potash Company registers sharp drop in net profit before tax

THE JD18.85 million net pre-tax profit posted by the Arab Potash Company in 1997 represented 22.63 per cent of the capital but was 57.24 per cent lower than the JD44.1 million registered in 1996. By adding other income, the company had around JD24.6 million profit balance for various allocations. Of this amount, the general assembly approved the recommendation of the board of directors to distribute dividends at a rate of 20 per cent.

The general assembly also approved the credit facilities extended by the Arab Bank and authorised the board of directors to take the necessary measures. Another approval by the general assembly authorised the Arab Potash Company (APC) to guarantee a \$28 million loan from the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank in favour of Jordan Magnesia Company. Though the Jordan Dead Sea Industries, APC owns directly and indirectly 46 per cent of Jordan Magnesia Company. The loan will finance part of the \$100 million project which will be built towards the end of this year and which is expected to begin production either in the year 2000 or 2001.

According to the annual report, the company's total sales last year amounted to 1,447,000 tonnes which is the lowest total since 1992. Attributing the drop to production decline, Board Chairman told the shareholders that APC focused on exports to high-yield markets. He indicated that sales to 28 countries around the world have provided the company with JD105 million in total earnings.

Dr. Irsheidat explained that the decline in production to 1.42 million tonnes was due to the depletion of the reserves of the "carnallite" raw material. Such a depletion, he said, was caused by the floods (in 1992 and 1993) which lowered the salt density in the Dead Sea. Other reasons included quick growth of salty clots, the chairman added.

He stressed that to achieve the policy of optimising the shareholders' equity in terms of increasing profitability and reserves, the APC is constantly seeking to increase and diversify production and income through establishing various industries associated with Dead Sea minerals. In this regard, he mentioned that commercial production of high purity industrial potash is expected to start during the second half of this year. Industrial salt and table salt are already available on the local and international markets, Dr. Irsheidat said, as their production have started in 1997.

Other projects that will be implemented in the near future include potassium nitrate, potassium sulphate and dicalcium phosphate.

The APC balance sheet total of the end of 1997 amounted to JD340.8 million, 8.7 per cent more than the total at the end of 1996 (Al Ra'i + Ad Dustour + Al Aswaq).

U.S. financial services company sees euro advent affecting Jordan

NEW YORK (AFP) — The U.S. financial sector is bracing to gain from the euro — the European single currency — and remains confident the new money will not displace the dollar as the international reserve currency.

"It's brilliant," said Howard Lutnick, president of the financial services firm Cantor Fitzgerald, stressing that the euro's advent will create the first-ever real counterpart to the U.S. bond market in 11 European Union nations.

"Euro is like a child that grows," he said. "It will take 40 years before it turns into a reserve currency," and thus rivals the dollar in that capacity. "Everyone that thinks otherwise is dreaming."

Columbia University economics professor Robert

Mundell recently wrote in the Wall Street Journal that "diversification from the dollar to the euro would begin once confidence in the policies of the new European Central Bank (ECB) were established," including the ability to enforce strict fiscal discipline.

The financial services company Salomon Smith Barney warned in a recent report that "despite low inflation, regional growth divergences will pose the first challenge for the ECB."

Setting an initial interest rate for the euro also presents a challenge, with rates currently running from 3.3 per cent in Germany to 6.75 per cent in Ireland.

And one of the ECB's first tests will be enforcing the 1992 Maastricht treaty's budgetary guidelines,

according to Salomon. Robert Medley of Medley Global Advisors says U.S. officials, already facing a weak yen, want to avoid a feeble euro.

"The tendency to let the euro being weak to tackle European economic problems will grow" in the months after the new currency is introduced, said Mr. Medley.

U.S. officials to private have already told their European counterparts that such weakness would be unacceptable, according to Mr. Medley.

The euro currency zone makes up the second-largest financial market in the world behind the United States, and U.S. investors are hungrily eyeing the new area, where they will be able to buy stocks and bonds more easily.

"The foreign exchange activity is going to disappear within six months and will be replaced by fixed income activity," mostly government bonds, according to Mr. Lutnick.

"To compete with the dollar, euro will need that vast fixed income market," he said.

Jockeying will be fierce among member states to determine which bond will become the benchmark for the European Union and play the role the U.S. 30-year Treasury bond plays with interest rates here.

"The German bond has the highest probability of becoming the benchmark but German banks still have the idea of protecting their market," according to Mr. Lutnick.

Giant U.S. mutual funds eagerly await the new

opportunities tied to the euro.

Vanguard, the second largest, recently launched European operations, setting up retirement savings accounts based on the U.S. stock index Standard and Poor's 500 and on the Morgan Stanley Capital International Europe Index.

Salomon Smith Barney says the euro's advent will affect countries on the edge of the EU, like Egypt, Jordan or Morocco, whose currencies are pegged to the dollar, but who could decide to tie them to the euro instead.

And speculation based on differences between European and Asian currencies over the last few years could shift to countries neighbouring the euro zone, the firm said.

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7773	0.6933	0.7036	113.04	1.4332	1755.10	2.0014	5.9605
DE Mark	0.5627	1.0000	0.3366	0.3366	74.82	0.8061	987.12	1.1259	3.3534
GB Sterling	1.6700	2.9889	1.0000	0.8466	163.33	1.7456	2033.76	2.4838	7.4603
CH Franc	0.6723	1.1946	0.4022	1.0000	89.39	0.9629	1179.50	1.3450	4.0087
JP Yen	0.0075	1.3347	0.4498	1.1172	1.0000	1.0765	13.18	150.32	4.4789
CA Dollar	0.6977	1.2816	0.4225	0.8566	1.08	1.0000	1270.80	1.4551	4.3265
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0116	0.3406	0.0847	1321.00	0.8159	1.139	3.3932	100.00
NL Guilder	0.4997	89.79	0.2388	0.7431	66.44	0.7159	876.72	1.0000	2.9774
FR Franc	0.1678	0.2980	0.1003	0.2491	22.30	0.2403	33.56	33.6600	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	1.0000	0.7090	3.7502	0.3770	3.6400	0.3048	3.6727	1515.25	3.4025
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	1.0000	5.2894	0.5317	5.1340	0.4300	5.1801	2137.17	4.7990
Saudi Riyal	0.2667	0.1891	1.0000	0.1006	0.97	0.0813	0.98	404.05	0.9073
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8908	9.9483	1.0000	9.66	0.8087	9.74	4019.55	9.0289
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0303	1.0303	1.0000	0.8088	1.01	416.28	0.9348
Kuwait Dinar	3.2803	2.3257	12.3018	1.2366	11.94	1.0000	12.05	4970.48	9.3458
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0206	0.9911	0.8030	1.00	412.57	0.9264
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4679	2.4750	0.2488	2.4022	0.2012	2.4238	100.00	2.2455
Egyptian	0.2939	0.2084	1.1022	0.1109	1.0898	0.0896	1.0794	445.33	1.0000

Energy

Oil	Last	Review
Brent	14.61	13.88
W. Texas	16.20	15.52
Bonny	14.61	13.88
Dubai	12.90	12.46
UL Gas	157.00	156.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4741	0.15967	0.39689	53.5025
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48412	0.16304	0.40527	36.2918
KW Dinar	3.2803	5.8309	1.96425	4.88261	436.681
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.71699	1.58856	3.94789	353.232
CY Pound	1.9121	3.3971	1.144	2.8435	254.333

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	306.1	306.6
Silver (oz's)	6.22	6.25
Platinum (oz's)	395.1	397.1
AL (3 Months)	1437	1439
CU (3 Months)	1855	1857
Zinc (3 Months)	1109	1110
Lead (3 Months)	860	862
NI (3 Months)	5580	5590

Libor Fixing

Period	-1-	-3-	-6-	-1-
Cny	Months	Months	Months	Year
USD	5.6641	5.7422	5.8359	5.9609
GBP	7.3802	7.4427	7.4427	7.3558
JPY	0.6354	0.6979	0.7282	0.7500
DEM	3.8875	3.8229	3.9271	4.1148
FRF	3.8449	1.6979	1.8229	2.0104
CHF	1.5729	3.8563	3.7569	3.8883
ITL	6.4190	6.1410	6.2310	-

Main Equity Indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
New York	DOW JONES	9082.02	28.65	0.32	9131.88	9066.61	9063.37
New York	S&P 500	1114.69	2.94	0.26	1118.32	1111.75	1111.75
London	FT-SE 100	6010.3	82	1.38	6025.1	5932.7	5928.3
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	18601.1	-40.16	-0.26	18698.8	18463.8	18641.3
Paris	CAC 40	3880.92	146.89	3.94	3891.11	3732.55	3733.93
Frankfurt	DAX	5107.44	-1.04	-0.02	5115.88	5091.54	5108.48

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET															
NOTING RATE CHANGES															
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (25/04/1998 - 29/04/1998)															
WEEKLY REPORT															
DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS		COMPANY NAME	P/B	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE PRICE	MARKET SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
HIGH	LOW														
350,000	342,000	ARAB BANK	14.3	1.14	63	32206	7755505	248.00	355.50	344.00	350.00	+3.00	351.142	585	4
1,830	1,720	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	14.1	4.05	76	127229	212524	1.74	1.74	1.67	1.73	+0.03	1.703	304	4
1,350	1,500	BANK OF JORDAN	4.2	0.00	13	57348	71855	1.50	1.34	1.25	1.34	+0.06	1.262	364	4
1,000	950	MID. EAST INV. BK.	4.0	0.00	1	150	138	0.99	0.92	0.92	0.92	+0.03	0.930	602	1
1,830	1,160	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	8.2	0.81	23	17564	38370	1.78	1.69	1.40	1.40	+0.18	1.402	100	3
5,990	5,320	THE HOUSING BK.	19.1	3.32	54	23735	141684	5.75	6.03	5.75	6.03	+0.28	5.963	687	4
1,850	1,790	JOR. KIDMET BANK	9.0	0.00	11	4092	7472	1.84	1.84	1.82	1.83	+0.01	1.826	307	3
490	410	JOR. OUTP. BANK	4.0	10.45	18	12019	8053	0.47	0.49	0.47	0.47	+0.02	0.470	040	4
1,850	1,750	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	15.5	8.00	40	12927	22144	1.84	1.84	1.75	1.83	+0.03	1.797	071	4
1,070	1,000	UNION BK. DEV. INV.	14.0	0.00	3	11100	11329	1.04	1.03	1.02	1.02	+0.04	1.021	054	1
1,870	1,700	JOR. INV. TRN. BANK	10.3	0.00	1	100	141	1.70	1.41	1.41	1.41	+0.09	1.410	001	1
890	840	BATT. AL-MAL (BRIEMA)	4.0	0.00	14	5850	6958	0.89	0.87	0.81	0.82	+0.07	0.869	292	4
3,790	3,700	ARAB BANKING CO.	20.2	0.00	7	1240	3219	3.70	2.57	2.57	3.57	+0.13	2.555	008	2
BANKS SECTOR															
2,700	2,700	JORDAN INSURANCE	11.4	5.54	1	400	1080	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.70	-	2.700	008	1
1,040	1,000	ARABIAN SVCS. INSUR.	54.9	0.00	3	3500	3500	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.000	175	3
3,870	3,870	JORDANIAN TRUST	5.3	5.33	2	66	20	3.87	3.50	3.50	3.50	+0.37	3.500	003	1
2,220	2,620	JOR. PRINCE INSUR.	4.0	11.48	14	8064	18847	2.13	3.14	2.05	2.14	+0.01	2.090	112	2
1,350	1,350	HOLY LAND INSUR.	6.2	0.00	1	40000	72000	1.25	1.20	1.20	1.20	+0.05	1.200	4377	1
INSURANCE SECTOR															
2,240	2,180	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.3	5.21	121	43752	33340	3.17	3.17	3.09	3.11	+0.06	3.105	322	4
2,340	2,120	JORD. TELECOM. CO.	14.4	4.34	3	200	484	2.35	2.48	2.34	2.36	-	2.420	007	3
4,700	4,290	KIDMET KILLS	51.9	0.00	3	7114	33700	4.51	4.74	4.74	4.74	+0.33	4.740	607	1
3,040	3,900	WELLS. OVERSEAS FIN.	11.3	4.26	5	1184	5635	3.90	3.90	3.75	3.75	+0.15	3.972	089	1
2,100	2,100	SHIPPING LINES	70.7	4.00	2	6000	12000	3.10	2.60	2.60	3.00	+0.10	2.600	087	1
1,130	1,950	KILL. PORTFOLIO	41.1	0.00	43	14186	15828	1.06	1.08	1.03	1.03	+0.07	1.045	284	4
1,380	1,340	JORDANIAN TEL. TRN.	14.7	6.52	1	100	448	1.37	1.36	1.34	1.34	+0.01	1.360	038	1
1,200	1,150	MID. EAST HOTELS	197.3	0.00	3	2000	2235	1.14	1.14	1.11	1.11	+0.03	1.110	039	2
4,200	4,000	ARAB TEL. INV. EDUC.	7.3	2.00	6	1350	5433	4.05	5.05	5.00	4.00	+0.05	4.024	013	2
970	950	SARAA EDUCATION	16.2	0.00	8	6850	6382	0.94	0.95	0.92	0.92	+0.02	0.932	152	5
1,510	1,550	UNITED CO.	6.7	7.25	50	18900	38464	1.55	1.53	1.48	1.52	+0.03	1.506	378	5
SERVICES SECTOR															
2,350	2,730	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	14.8	4.40	36	13070	31050	2.81	2.81	2.50	2.50	+0.31	2.575	020	3
5,000	5,750	ARAB POTASH CO.	39.3	3.48	1	350	1438	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	+0.05	5.752	000	1
11,150	10,500	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.7	8.08	82	28457	326005	11.00	11.35	10.83	11.00	+0.17	11.000	1460	4
1,460	1,260	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	11.7	0.00	15	2465	3548	1.43	1.47	1.40	1.47	+0.04	1.439	347	4
1,260	1,150	INDUSTRIAL COMM. MGR.	-	0.00	15	4252	2505	1.20	1.20	1.18	1.18	+0.01	1.136	087	2
5,320	6,330	JOR. WOREST KILLS	36.3	3.15	1	100	632	5.35	5.35	5.25	5.25	+0.03	5.350	003	1
5,740	5,240	ARAB YACHT. TRN.	14.9	3.71	378	185434	1018717	5.51	5.50	5.38	5.38	+0.12	5.494	2640	3
1,370	1,170	JOR. PIPE INDUST.	10.4	8.00	1	100	125	1.37	1.35	1.25	1.29	+0.07	1.250	003	1
1,670	1,670	GERALD KINING	111.5	4.00	1	100	159	1.67	1.59	1.59	1.59	+0.08	1.590	010	1
6,170	5,900	DAR ALAMANA DV. INV.	7.0	4.04	1	150	843	5.10	5.79	5.79	5.79	+0.31	5.792	003	1
3,870	2,830	ARAB ALUM. IND.	30.6	8.92	7	1257	5648	2.87	3.85	2.78	2.78	+0.03	2.830	033	3
510	430	LORENCES & POLYMER	16.3	0.00	1	100	123	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	+0.00	0.480	001	1
740	400	ARAB PAPER COV. TRD.	32.3	0.00	1	100	1095	0.75	0.73	0.73	0.73	+0.03	0.730	043	1
580	540	NATIONAL IRON.	-	0.00	10	4673	2431	0.57	0.56	0.54	0.54	+0.03	0.543	075	3
410	380	INTERGLO. PETRO. CHEM.	-	0.00	67	98450	39282	0.40	0.41	0.39	0.40	-	0.399	2441	3
1,470	1,340	UNIV. CHEM. IND.	14.0	5.84	20	5600	7727	1.44	1.44	1.35	1.37	+0.07	1.380	373	3
1,210	1,130	KAIL-CABLE WIRE. WYAC	27.2	0.00	48	24621	118	1.17	1.13	1.13	1.13	+0.05	1.148	118	4
420	470	WAL. CO.	0.00	0.00	30	18800	11317	0.40	0.42	0.40	0.40	-	0.411	019	4
1,380	1,300	ARAB PAPER COV. TRD.	14.7	5.51	57	25011	33338	1.37	1.38	1.33	1.33	+0.04	1.359	500	4
1,010	870	UNIV. WOOD. CHEM.	13.4	7.06	40	14700	14318	0.88	0.87	0.85	0.85	+0.03	0.857	278	4
710	480	JOR. IRON. RESOURCES	9.3	14.49	12	5750	3916	0.49	0.48	0.48	0.48	-	0.481	072	3
1,490	1,440	KAIL. CHLORINE	9.5	7.41	3	11000	13350	1.47	1.40	1.35	1.36	+0.13	1.395	152	3
1,040	970	JOR. WIS. CABLE CO.	12.3	11.49	53	28585	34007	0.37	0.42	0.37	0.37	+0.10	0.381	043	4
1,400	1,370	EL. IRAT. READY WARE	146.23	5.00	25	10490	16223	1.37	1.38	1.34	1.34	+0.01	1.348	143	3
3,310	1,180	ELST. TOBACCO	7.3	5.60	35	30468	37780	1.27	1.28	1.23	1.25	+0.03	1.241	204	3
1,100	1,000	UNION CH. & VEG.	11.1	0.00	55	73280	78937	1.05	1.13	1.05	1.11	+0.06	1.031	1408	4
860	790	JORDAN STEEL	8.3	9.44	33	27649	20381	0.79	0.79	0.74	0.74	+0.05	0.752	180	4
1,650	1,540	MID. EAST COMPLEX	10.7	0.00	54	108500	46556	0.59	0.60	0.59	0.59	+0.01	0.593	192	4
1,000	970	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	54.9	0.00	3	1304	1304	0.97	1.00	1.00	1.00	+0.00	1.000	022	2
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR															
GRAND TOTAL					1739	1233859	16421014	INDEX NUMBER	170.32	CHANGE + 0.25%					
NO. OF DAYS TRADED: 4															
DAILY AVERAGE OF TRADING VOLUME: 3,605,154															
DAILY AVERAGE OF TRADED SHARES: 306,015															
DAILY AVERAGE OF CONTRACTS: 435															
PARALLEL MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (25/04/1998 - 29/04/1998)															
WEEKLY REPORT															
DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS		COMPANY NAME	P/B	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE PRICE	MARKET SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
HIGH	LOW														
940	910	EXPORT & PETROLEUM	17.0	0.00	30	39850	24427	0.92	0.93	0.91	0.92	-	0.919	199	4
1,230	1,150	IRONIC IRON. RESOURCES	10.4	0.00	2	1150	1150	1.15	1.15	1.15	1.15	-	1.150	033	1
330	330	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	-	0.00	2	600	186	0.33	0.31	0.31	0.31	+0.02	0.310	181	4
410	330	JOR. TRADE FACT.	-	0.00	31	754600	109311	0.40	0.41	0.40	0.41	+0.01	0.410	1747	4
580	550	NACE. WY. REPT. POLY.	29.1	0.00	3	1800	934	0.55	0.53	0.53	0.53	+0.02	0.530	160	1

Jarrar wins RACJ speed test

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN— Yasser Jarrar made an impressive comeback Friday after taking first place in the third Pepsi Speed Test at the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ) race track.

Edmer Al Shishani came in the second and Amir Najjar third with the absence of the experienced Ghath Bilbeisi paving the way for Jarrar to reign through Friday's three rounds.

In addition to Bilbeisi, who won the first and the second speed tests of the year, Yanal Qomok, Ahmad

Daoud and Barkev Shadian were also absent from the event.

Jarrar who dropped to eighth in the second round after losing the first round with a split of a second to Bilbeisi felt relaxed after winning all Friday's rounds.

No women drivers took part in the event. The only woman to compete in the second speed test was Abeer Batikhi. Usual competitors Maya Al Mufti who is taking part in Rally du Liban, and Tala Al Shawa were absent.

Twenty three drivers covered a distance of 1.74 km of the curved track. The competition consisted of

two rounds and an additional third one for the best 10 drivers.

Meanwhile, the countdown has begun for the May 14-15 Jordan International Rally, considered one of the most important rallies in the Middle East.

About thirty drivers from around the world are expected to take place in the event.

Famous names such as United Arab Emirates' Mohammad Bin Sulayem, Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Bakhshab and Cyprus' Andreas Tsoloufias are expected to take part.

European Soccer Preview

Unfashionable Lens ready to make history

PARIS (AFP) — Unfashionable Lens, who have never won the French league title in their 92-year history, will need to keep their minds on the job in hand when they face Paris St. Germain in the French Cup final on Saturday.

For the little club from the industrial north, who lead Metz in the First Division title race by two points, travel to Auxerre seven days after their Cup showdown hoping to clinch the elusive 'double' by claiming their first-ever Championship win.

Daniel Leclercq the former player who took over as the Lens manager at the start of the season, has stressed that his team will be going into Saturday's Cup Final "quietly confident."

"We have prepared for the match in exactly the same way as any other match," said Leclercq.

"We have worked hard all season, learned from our mistakes and know we have to stay concentrated. We are confident we can win our final matches."

Paris Saint Germain, who salvaged their disappointing season by winning the League Cup, were the last team to beat Lens — scoring a 2-1 victory in the competition's semi-final on March 12.

It was a rare stumble in Lens' glory run which started in mid-February and which brought 11 victories from 12 matches, with 29 goals scored and six conceded.

Lens, who avenged their Cup defeat by beating PSG 3-0 in the league three days later, saw their chances boosted this week when defender Jean-Guy Wallemme was declared fit for the final. Wallemme said he felt no ill effects from his ankle injury when he resumed training sessions this week.

PSG's outgoing Brazilian manager Ricardo admitted that Lens were currently playing the best football in France — but he made it clear that PSG had experience on their side and said he felt Italian striker Marco Simone could make the difference.

In Germany, Bayern Munich face Duisburg on Saturday in a preview of next month's German Cup final — but they will be without injured internationals Dieter Hamann and Giovanni Elber as they bid to chase down league leaders Kaiserslautern.

With two matches left to play, Kaiserslautern, who are at home against Wolfsburg on Saturday, are still two-points clear in the title race.

Coach Otto Rehagel — 'King Otto' as he is known among Kaiserslautern fans — is clearly upset at what he sees as Bayern having things made easy for them by the attitude of late-season opponents.

"When the other teams play us they are all hyper-motivated and play at their best," he said.

"Leverkusen, for instance, played fabulous football against us but then in Munich last Sunday they wet their pants." Bayern's Brazilian forward Elber has still not been given the green light by his doctor to play again after his broken collar bone and will watch from the sidelines in Duisburg.

Rumors that Borussia Monchengladbach captain Stefan Effenberg has signed for Bayern, the club for whom he played between 1990 and 1992, have been flatly denied by both sides.

"The fact is that we are interested in Effenberg and we have been in contact," Hoeness said. "But we will only make our negotiations concrete if Gladbach definitely get relegated."

A Gladbach loss against Hansa Rostock Saturday would seal the club's fate. FC Cologne, meanwhile, are still seething at the blatant foul committed by Schalke's Oliver Held on Wednesday evening, which might spell the club's first-ever relegation.

With the teams level at 0-0, Held used his hand in the 80th minute to stop a Rene Trischok shot on the goal line.

"Because I didn't see it clearly I appealed to the player's honesty," referee Uwe Kemmling said. "He swore he didn't use his hand."

Cologne lost the game after a 90th-minute Schalke goal.

Real Madrid, dethroned by new champions Barcelona, will be seeking to secure second place in the Spanish league when

they host Real Zaragoza Monday night.

The European Cup finalists have been put in the domestic shade by their old rivals this season with Barca adding the Spanish Cup to their league title after a penalty shootout against Mallorca after a 1-1 draw Wednesday night.

With just three games left, Barcelona have 74 points to Real's 60.

A gaggle of clubs still in with a chance of a Champions League spot — Athletic Bilbao, Real Sociedad, Mallorca, Real Betis and Celta Vigo.

Third-placed Bilbao are at home to Oviedo on Sunday, while fourth-placed Real Sociedad travel to Gijon, who are already assured of relegation after a disastrous season that seen them collect only 12 points from 35 matches.

In Italy, Juventus are hoping to put a week of controversy firmly behind them on Sunday when they head towards their 25th Italian league title.

With a four-point lead and three games to go, Juventus could conceivably become champions on Sunday if they beat Vicenza, as expected, and later Milan lose to Fiorentina at San Siro, which is certainly not expected.

But more than anything, Juventus will be hoping that the weekend goes by without their match referee causing another uproar in the world of Italian sport and politics.

MPs nearly came to blows as they discussed the alleged bias towards Juventus by match officials after Inter's Ronaldo was denied a penalty in Turin last Sunday and Juventus were awarded one literally seconds later.

The 1-0 victory for the home side will almost certainly make them champions for the second year running.

Juventus will be without suspended Mark Iuliano, the defender at the heart of two recent controversies after he fisted out a header against Lazio (no penalty given) and then collided with Ronaldo (no penalty given).

Pugnacious Dutch midfielder Edgar Davids is also suspended, but there are no worries for Alessandro Del Piero and Filippo "Super Pippo" Inzaghi, the Serie A's best strike partnership with a combined 36 goals.

The deadly duo will need to be on their best behaviour, though, as another booking for either man will mean an automatic suspension.

Vicenza, who bounced back from their European Cup Winners' Cup exit at Stamford Bridge to beat Lazio last weekend, will again look to Pasquale Luiso and Lamberto Zauli to thrill a capacity home crowd.

Inter Milan will have to field a makeshift attack as Ronaldo starts serving out his two-match ban for accusing Italy's referees of being biased in favour of Juventus.

Fellow Brazilian Ze Elias starts a three-match ban after the game in Turin and Chilean striker Ivan Zamorano is also suspended.

Coach Gigi Simoni, who has been suspended for running onto the pitch in protest last Sunday, will be watching from the stands.

Without Ronaldo and Zamorano, Inter's hope rests on France's Youri Djorkaeff and Nigerian Olympic gold medalist Nwankwo Kanu in attack, with Uruguayan Alvaro Recoba waiting on the bench.

Portuguese playmaker Paulo Sousa gets a rare start as Inter play their last league game before next week's UEFA Cup final against Serie A rivals Lazio in Paris.

Lazio, their morale sky high after winning the Italian Cup on Wednesday with a 3-1 victory over AC Milan, are away to Lecce on Saturday.

Parma, who will welcome the return of Colombian striker Faustino Asprilla, host Sampdoria, Udinese are away to Napoli and AS Roma are at home to an AC Milan side who return to the scene of the crime — the Olympic stadium where they squandered a 2-0 aggregate lead in midweek.

Wright on time for Gunners' title push

LONDON (AFP) — Ian Wright could make a dramatic return to the Arsenal side as the Gunners go in search of the one victory they need to secure the English Premiership title against Everton at Highbury on Sunday.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger has been reluctant to risk rushing back his star striker, who has been out for four months with hamstring trouble followed by a cartilage operation and then a groin injury.

But following a hamstring injury to Dennis Bergkamp in Wednesday's 1-0 win over Derby at Highbury, Wenger is seriously short of firepower and may be tempted to recall the 34-year-old.

Everton are a team Wright loves playing against and he is desperate for a chance to extend a sequence of 12 goals in nine previous appearances against the relegation-threatened Merseysiders. If Wright does return it will also be a huge boost to his chance of going to the World Cup finals with England.

"I'm fit and ready now," insists Wright. "People are always asking whether I'll be able to play again this season and get my chance for the World Cup but the first thing is just to get back and be involved again with Arsenal."

"If the manager decides to use me in some way, even coming off the substitutes' bench, then that's great. But that's a decision for him to make."

Arsenal face tough trips to Liverpool and Aston Villa next week and Wenger could be tempted to go for broke against Everton to secure a 10th Premiership win in a row and clinch Arsenal's first league title in seven years.

The big dilemma for manager Arsene Wenger is whether it is still too soon for Wright to make his first-team comeback.

He returned to action in the reserves against West Ham at Southend on Monday and Wenger said: "Ian did well. He had 60 minutes on the pitch and there was no bad reaction afterwards, but I will wait and see whether he plays against Everton on Sunday. I haven't decided yet."

If Arsenal win on Sunday, Manchester United's home clash with bitter rivals Leeds on Monday will become academic for the Old Trafford outfit — who are already guaranteed the second place in next season's Champions' League.

Elsewhere, there is still plenty to play for as the fight to avoid relegation intensifies and the battle for UEFA Cup places reaches its final stages.

With just two games remaining, Crystal Palace are already relegated and they seem certain to be joined by Barnsley, who face a tough away trip to UEFA Cup hopefuls Leicester.

Third-bottom Bolton are the leading candidates to take the third relegation spot but they face a relatively easy home match against doomed Palace while their main rivals for survival have potentially tricky encounters.

Everton, currently two points ahead of Bolton, travel to title-chasing Arsenal, who are unbeaten in the league in over four months and who are anxious to wrap up the title in front of their own fans.

Tottenham, who are three points clear of Bolton, face a difficult away trip to traditional party-poopers Wimbledon, who have kept a remarkable six clean sheets in their last seven games as they edged towards survival.

Newcastle, who are four points clear of the drop zone, need a victory to secure top flight football next season, but they face a Chelsea side whose players are keen to press their claims for a place in the European Cup Winners' Cup final against Stuttgart in Stockholm.

Jordan Football Association suspends Premier League

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Football Association (JFA) Friday suspended the Premier League's Championship following a demand by seven clubs to reallocate the formula of ticket sales revenue, a JFA official said.

Saleh Irsheidat, the JFA vice president, said that the association's decision followed a similar one by the seven clubs on Thursday to suspend their participation in JFA contests until a new formula is agreed upon to reallocate the revenue.

Mr. Irsheidat told the Jordan Times that the resumption of the competition — now into its second week — would be possible "only when a compromise is reached that would satisfy all parties concerned."

He added that a committee was formed to discuss the issue with the concerned parties, adding that a meeting was expected "soon" to discuss the matter with representatives of the seven clubs.

The dispute erupted following a demand by Al Faisali, Al Ramtha, Al Ahli, Kufroum, Al Arabi, Al Hussein and Al Qadissiyeh clubs in which they requested an amendment of the 1997 formula that governs the allocation of the JFA's competitions revenue.

Al Wihdat and Shabab Al Hussein are opposed to any change while Al

Jazireh did not attend the meeting.

The formula, which was agreed upon in 1997, stipulates that the two clubs contesting a match would receive 35 per cent of the revenues collected from ticket sales.

Prior to the start of the 1998 season, the JFA sold the marketing rights including tickets to four businessmen for JD300,000.

After the signing of the new JFA contract, the seven clubs insisted that the amount received by the JFA be distributed among the 10 clubs that compete in the Premier League — a demand rejected by the Kingdom's major soccer club Al Wihdat which maintains a vast popularity among football fans.

The coalition also demands a share in the revenues from TV coverage as well as advertisements for the JFA's competitions.

"We believe that the amount should be distributed equally among the 10 clubs irrespective of revenues collected by each match," said Abdul Halim Samarah, the president of Al Ramtha club.

"The seven clubs have agreed not to join the Premier League until a new formula is created with a just distribution among the 10 clubs," Mr. Samarah told the Jordan Times.

"The big clubs are able to levy financial assistance from other sources but the small ones are not capable of doing

so. The JFA revenues are their sole financial source. Therefore there should be equality in the distribution of revenues," he added.

On the other hand, Al Wihdat's spokesman Khadir Sowwan said that any change in the current system would make his club reconsider its participation in the Premier League.

"While we felt that the 1997 formula was unjust to our club we nevertheless accepted it. However, any new change will make us reconsider our stand," Mr. Sowwan said.

"Records prove that Al Wihdat's matches are always attended by more than 20,000 fans, while other clubs are merely able to attract few hundreds to their games," he added.

He said that during his club's match against Shabab Al Hussein last week, 26,000 fans attended the match compared with only 100 spectators in the other matches.

"It is not fair to distribute ticket sales revenue equally between our club and those who are able only to attract few hundreds spectators. The revenues in the two matches definitely differ," Mr. Sowwan noted.

Al Wihdat have been the Premier League champion for the last four years and have also won the Cup Winners' Cup and Jordan Cup titles during the past two seasons.

First Division Basketball Championship

Orthodoxi beat Ahli to top standings

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Orthodoxi Friday beat Al Ahli 82-61 to take the lead atop the three-team First Division Basketball Championship playoffs which conclude May 5.

Al Ahli trailed their all-time rivals 41-35 at halftime before the former champions wrapped up their win with a 21 point margin.

Al Orthodoxi's win enabled them to take the lead before meeting titleholders Al Jazireh in the competition's final match which they need to win to regain the title they held for a record time.

Last season's runner-up Al Ahli finished third this season with an incomplete lineup showing the effects of inadequate pre-season training. The team's inconsistent form forced them to rely on the individual efforts of Faisal Nsour and Yousef Zaghloul.

In addition their bench was depleted throughout the playoffs with Mohammad Samali and Marwan Ma'touq both nursing injuries, and centre Ramez Hammoudeh quitting the team for personal reasons.

Al Orthodoxi were the only team to beat Al Jazireh twice this year 73-69 in the preliminaries and 65-61 in the first playoff match.

Al Jazireh who managed to beat Al Orthodoxi once 92-84 in the preliminary round can retain their title by winning the match by any score with score difference between the two teams tied.

Al Jazireh beat Al Ahli 75-69, and 57-53 in the preliminaries and 78-63 and 57-43 in the playoffs, while Al Orthodoxi beat Al Ahli 74-49 and 69-37 in the preliminaries and 84-61 in the first playoff match.

Al Ahli, who ended Al Orthodoxi's 1976-1989 undisputed reign, were champions in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 aided by the signing of Naser Bushnaq.

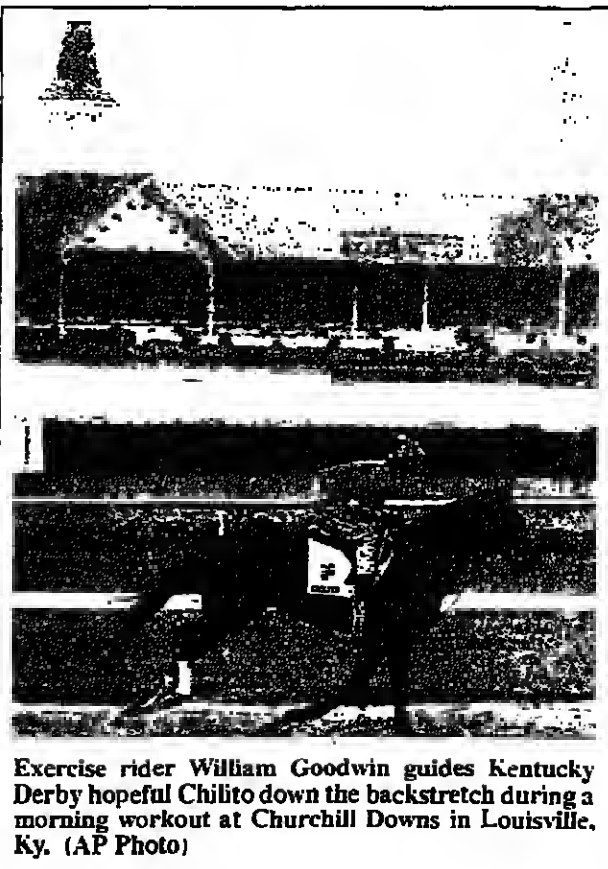
Al Orthodoxi came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996. Al Jazireh ended a 30-year drought by winning the title last year.

PLAYOFF STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	Sf	Sa	Pts
Orthodoxi	13	12	1	1068	721	25
Jazireh	13	11	2	1086	753	24
Ahli	14	6	8	900	907	20

SCOREBOARD

National League	Florida	1
San Diego	Pittsburgh	6
Los Angeles	San Francisco	0
Atlanta	NY Mets	0
Colorado	St Louis	3
Chicago Cubs		
American League		
Detroit	Texas	2
Kansas City	Toronto	4
Tampa Bay	Minnesota	0
Baltimore	Chi White Sox	1
Anaheim	Boston	2
Oakland	Cleveland	2
NY Yankees	Seattle	8 (10 Innings)
National Hockey League		
First round playoffs (series best-of-seven):		
Eastern Conference Quarterfinals		
New Jersey	Ottawa	1
(Ottawa leads series, 3-2)		
Western Conference Quarterfinals		
Dallas	San Jose	2
(Dallas leads series, 3-2)		
Edmonton	Colorado	1
(Colorado leads series, 3-2)		
Detroit	Phoenix	1
(Detroit leads series, 3-2)		



Exercise rider William Goodwin guides Kentucky Derby hopeful Chilito down the backstretch during a morning workout at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky. (AP Photo)

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Iraq accuses Butler of working for U.S. to prevent ending sanctions

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq accused U.N. disarmament chief Richard Butler on Friday of trying to prevent the lifting of the U.N. embargo by claiming that Baghdad had failed to account for up to 700 mustard-gas shells.

"Butler included in his report this information concerning the shells to enable the American government to persist in its accusations against Iraq and that's exactly what happened," an Iraqi government spokesman told the Iraqi news agency.

Mr. Butler, chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on disarming Iraq, circulated a report this week by a chemical munitions team that found that between 500 and 700 155-mm mustard-gas filled shells remain unaccounted for.

"Butler's vain attempts are aimed at preventing the implementation of Paragraph 22 of U.N. Security Council resolution

687 [on the lifting of the nearly eight-year-old sanctions]," the Iraqi spokesman said.

The U.N. Security Council on Monday extended the sanctions which can only be lifted when all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction have been eliminated.

Iraq says it destroyed all its weapons of mass destruction by the end of 1991 following the Gulf war, but U.N. arms inspectors have been unable to

verify the Iraqi assertions.

In Washington, White House spokesman Michael McCurry said U.S. officials were reviewing the chemical report but that it was cause for grave concern.

"This is one more reminder of the need to remain vigilant when it comes to assessing the current performance of the government of Iraq with respect to its obligations to Security Council resolutions," he said.

Spy says supplying Iraq with information was 'fun'

NEW YORK (AP) — In his first U.S. interview, convicted spy Juergen Gietler told the "60 Minutes" television news program that providing secrets to Iraq during the build up to the Gulf war was "permanent fun, five days per week."

He added that any "country that respects itself" would have jailed him for much longer than the five-year prison sentence he served in Germany.

"If there's something I am unsatisfied about it's that I didn't [spy] for a longer time, or especially now where Iraq is again threatened by the United States," Mr. Gietler said. He admits that he received money from Iraq, but said it was not his primary motivation.

Mr. Gietler worked as an

attaché to Germany, Gen. Osmat Joudi Mohammad, by chance at a restaurant and struck up a conversation. He said he volunteered to supply the information.

"To me, the victims in Baghdad, and in other parts of Iraq were the important ones," Mr. Gietler said, even though the allies had not yet attacked Iraq when he was providing the documents.

Mr. Gietler was arrested by German police in August 1990 after counter-intelligence agents intercepted a phone call by Gen. Osmat.

Mr. Gietler faced a secret trial in 1991 and was sentenced to five years in prison and now works for an import-export business in Germany.

Gore vows to pressure Russia on Iran arms

TEL AVIV (AFP) — U.S. Vice-President Al Gore vowed Friday to deal "vigorously" with Russia's new government on the issue of Russian missile technology exports to Iran.

Mr. Gore discussed Russia's role in helping Iran develop medium-range missiles during a lengthy meeting Friday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who considers Tehran's arms programme one of the greatest threats to Israel's security.

Mr. Gore said that once the new government of Russian Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko was in place in Moscow the issue would be tackled anew, notably at a meeting later this month of the Group of Seven industrialised states plus Russia.

The U.S. vice-president said he spoke with Mr. Kiriyenko just two hours after he was named premier and they agreed to jointly chair a new bilateral commission on the arms technology transfer issue and to meet this summer. Mr. Gore and former Russian Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin headed a similar panel under the previous government in Moscow.

"This new Russian government may be one that we can make some progress with on important questions," Mr. Gore said.

Egypt accuses Sudan of delaying handover of seized properties

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt on Friday accused Sudan of delaying the return of Egyptian properties seized since 1992. The statement is certain to spark tensions that had subsided early this year.

An Egyptian Foreign Ministry statement said an Egyptian delegation returned virtually empty-handed from the Sudanese capital of Khartoum where it had gone last month to receive the properties Sudan had promised to hand over.

The disputed properties include 33 schools, 16 guest houses and buildings on the campus of the Khartoum branch of Cairo University. Sudan confiscated them in 1992, after Cairo accused Khartoum of supporting Islamists trying to topple the Egyptian government.

While Egypt claims it owns the properties, Sudan said Egypt

only had them under long-term leases that have now expired.

But in March, Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir, in a bid to improve relations with its powerful neighbour, announced that the properties would be returned.

The Egyptians said the handover was supposed to be immediate, but the Sudan embassy in Cairo said last week that the properties will be returned over a period of three years.

Sudanese start voting on new constitution

KHARTOUM (AP) — Sudanese voted Friday in a referendum on approving a new constitution, which calls for maintaining a ban on political parties and keeping in place rule by Islamic law.

The constitution was endorsed by the parliament in March but Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir's military-backed government decided also to seek the people's approval.

Some 8 million of Sudan's 28 million people are eligible for voting in the referendum that will last for 20 days, the official Sudan Television said.

Voters are required to stamp "yes" or "no" on ballot papers at 800 polling centres across the nation.

The referendum will be organised and conducted by the government with no opposition or outside monitoring, and a "yes" result is considered a foregone conclusion. Exiled opposition leaders have already rejected the constitution, saying it is undemocratic. General Bashir seized power in a 1989 bloodless coup and annulled the existing constitution of the civilian government. He proposed the new constitution in an effort to show that he is moving the country from emergency rule to rule of law. The new constitution stipulates that Islam will remain the source of all legislation in Sudan.

EU calls for 'immediate ceasefire' in Sudan

LONDON (AFP) — The European Union (EU) called for an immediate ceasefire in Sudan where fighting between government troops and rebels in the south has displaced tens of thousands of people.

"We urge all sides in the dispute to adopt a positive attitude and come to an agreement at the next session of the peace talks in Nairobi on May 2-5," said a statement issued by Britain, which currently holds the rotating EU presidency. "In order to enhance the chances of success of the talks and to end the suffering of the Sudanese people we call on all parties to effect an immediate ceasefire," said the statement issued by the Foreign Office. The EU said it was also increasingly concerned about the worsening humanitarian crisis in Bahr Al-Ghazal, southern Sudan, and called on the Sudanese government to facilitate deliveries by the United Nations and non-governmental organisations of food and other essential supplies.

Iran rejects U.S. report on sponsorship of terrorism

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran rejected on Friday a U.S. report branding the Islamic republic the most active state sponsor of terrorism in 1997 and said the allegations would deepen the rift between the two countries.

"Iran has repeatedly condemned terrorism around the world in all its forms," Iran's mission to the United Nations said in a statement carried by the official news agency IRNA.

"Such accusations build up the wall of mistrust which separates the two countries," it said.

The U.S. State Department annual report released Thursday said Iran was "the most active state sponsor of terrorism" despite the election of moderate Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, seen as Washington's best hope for improved ties with Tehran.

Iranian security agents conducted at least 13 assassinations in 1997, the majority of which targeted Iranian dissidents based in northern Iraq, the U.S. State Department said.

Iran also continued to provide support "in the form of training, money and/or weapons" to groups such as the anti-Israeli Hizbollah and the Palestinian group Hamas, according to the report.

"Unfortunately, despite the statements of President Khatami and others in the Iranian government condemning terrorism, terrorist activity directed from Iran has continued into 1998," a senior U.S. State Department official said.

The United States severed diplomatic relations with Iran in April 1980 after revolutionaries seized 52 hostages at the U.S. embassy in Tehran.

Following Mr. Khatami's election a year ago, Washington eased its policy of seeking to isolate Iran and has sought an official dialogue with Tehran.

Mr. Khatami has responded to the U.S. offer by proposing broader contacts between Iranians and Americans to promote understanding between the two countries.

But Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi said this week that Iran "feels no need" for official dialogue with Washington as long as it pursues its hostile policies towards the Islamic republic.

Dion awarded Order of Quebec

QUEBEC (AP) — Premier Lucien Bouchard awarded the Order of Quebec to the province's separatist premier, Dion, indisputably the most famous Quebec-born performer of her generation, drew a throng of journalists to a ceremony at the Quebec legislature where she was among 30 people awarded the Order of Quebec by Premier Lucien Bouchard. Bouchard shook Dion's hand as he praised her for attaining, at age 30, "heights unequalled in the history of Francophone song and for being Quebec's greatest ambassador."

MacPherson is world's wealthiest model

LONDON (AP) — Elle MacPherson has edged out Cindy Crawford as the world's wealthiest fashion model. The Australian beauty's net worth is about \$38 million, according to Business Age, a British magazine. Crawford is a notch below with an estimated wealth of \$36 million. In addition to her modeling fees, which can earn her \$34,000 an appearance, MacPherson has also made money from her Australian lingerie business, movie roles and co-ownership of the Fashion Cafe chain. Rounding out the top five were Claudia Schiffer, with \$34 million; Linda Evangelista, \$28 million; and Naomi Campbell, at \$27.5 million.

Spielberg to direct 'Memoirs of a Geisha'

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Steven Spielberg will direct the screen adaptation of Arthur Golden's novel "Memoirs of a Geisha" for Columbia Pictures and Dreamworks. Variety reported. The two studios said there is no budget yet for the movie, nor is there a screenwriter or even a script yet, though they hope to begin production in October, possibly in Japan. The book set over a period of 60 years is a fictional story of Nitta Sayuri, a girl who was sold into slavery in 1929, at the age of nine and who grew up to become a renowned Japanese geisha.

Mickey Mouse wants to be most famous Internet mascot

HUNTINGTON BEACH (AP) — Mickey Mouse wants to become the world's most famous Internet mascot. Mickey's boss, Walt Disney Co. Chairman Michael D. Eisner, is pushing to expand Disney's Internet business, which already includes three of the most popular sites on the World Wide Web. Disney wants to become "an aggressive competitor on the Internet," Eisner told journalists gathered for the annual Society of American Business Editors and Writers conference. Including its own Disney kids' Web site, Disney owns some of the Internet's most popular Web destinations.

'Titanic' is 'a terrible movie' — Albright

BEIJING (AP) — On a walk through a muddy studio set of imperial Beijing, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and leading Chinese film director Chen Kaige found a common dislike: "Titanic." "Why do people like it? I thought it was a terrible movie," Albright said. Chen said he found the story superficial. The two met at the state-run Beijing Film Studio, where they watched about 20 minutes of Chen's 1993 "Farewell My Concubine."



ANTI-EURO PROTEST: An anti-euro protestor pushes a large styrofoam model of the new European currency, the euro, over fellow protesters lying on the ground during a May Day demonstration in Madrid Friday. The anti-euro protesters maintained that the euro will make the rich richer and the poor poorer. European Union leaders are meeting in Brussels to finalise details of the long-awaited European single currency (See story on page 1) (AP photo)

Nine killed in factional fighting in Somali town

MOGADISHU (AFP) — At least nine people were killed and 16 were wounded when factional fighting flared up in the town of Jilib, southwest of the Somali capital on Friday, field radio operators in the area said.

The fighting pitted forces of Marjelen clan loyal to militia commander Mohammad Said Hirs "Morgan" against their Marehan rivals.

The reports said militiamen loyal to south Mogadishu warlord Hussein Mohammad Aided, whose supporters control parts of Jilib, were also fighting alongside the Marehan. Jilib is 300 kilometres southwest of Mogadishu.

Residents contacted by radio spoke of heavy shelling in the town as other unconfirmed reports said the death toll could be as high as 21.

Medical centres in Jilib declined to give casualty figures, saying only that scores of people were fleeing the town.

Observers here said a victory for General Morgan in Jilib would be short-lived as the neighbouring villages are controlled by hostile clans and his forces in the town would soon find themselves surrounded.

The new eruption of violence in Jilib comes as warlords reinforce their militias around the city of Kismayo, further south, after heavy fighting over the past week which has claimed at least 45 lives.

Russia proposes political adviser to Butler

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Russia, "after" failing to obtain a Russian deputy chairman to the top U.N. inspector, is now offering a new political adviser to the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM).

A Russian diplomat told

AFP on Thursday that discussions on the proposal were being held between Russia and UNSCOM tasked with disarming Iraq. UNSCOM spokesman Ewen Buchanan confirmed that Russia's proposal for a new political adviser for

UNSCOM chief Richard Butler "is being considered."

Russian Ambassador Sergei Lavrov wrote on April 23 to Mr. Butler, an Australian diplomat, proposing the addition of a Russian political adviser.

Los Angeles (AFP) — Steven Spielberg will direct the screen adaptation of Arthur Golden's novel "Memoirs of a Geisha" for Columbia Pictures and Dreamworks. Variety reported. The two studios said there is no budget yet for the movie, nor is there a screenwriter or even a script yet, though they hope to begin production in October, possibly in Japan.

The book set over a period of 60 years is a fictional story of Nitta Sayuri, a girl who was sold into slavery in 1929, at the age of nine and who grew up to become a renowned Japanese geisha.

Addressing a special ceremony to mark the 35th anniversary of the formation of the Special Forces, the King said the promotion was a recognition of the role of the Jordanian Armed Forces in the peacekeeping mission in the Gulf.

King Hussein headed the role of the Jordanian Armed Forces, the Public Security Department, the General Intelligence Department and the High Defence Department.

The King said he instructed the Prime Minister and the government to issue employees of these departments an additional month's salary at the end of May as a tribute to their role in the peacekeeping mission.

By Tareq Ayoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Royal Jordanian Air Force pilots and crew members were ordered to fly over the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Saturday to show solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The pilots were ordered to fly over the West Bank and drop leaflets with messages of support for the Palestinian people.

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Hizbollah fighter killed in Tyre (AFP) — The State Ministry said one of its fighters was killed in a clash with the Israeli army on Saturday in Tyre. The fighter, Muhammad Masoud, was killed while carrying out his duties. The Israeli army said it was not involved in the clash.

Volume 23 Number 632

Jordanians King's rule

AMMAN (AFP) — Jordanians on Saturday celebrated the 45th anniversary of the accession of King Hussein to the throne. The King's reign has been marked by a period of stability and progress. The King's rule has been characterized by a commitment to the welfare of his subjects and the development of the country.

Prince Hassan ensuring

AMMAN (AFP) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Turk al-Prince Sultan bin Turki al-Jaloudi on Saturday ensured the peace process forward and ensure the success of the upcoming London meeting between the U.S. and Palestinian leaders.

Prince Abd

AMMAN (AFP) — His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah bin Al-Hussein on Saturday visited the Royal Daxre Education Center. The Prince's visit was part of a tour to inspect the progress of the center's work.

Israel bars R flying through


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MUNICIPALITY OF GREATER AMMAN

FESTIVITIES TO MARK HIS MAJESTY KING HUSSEIN'S ASSUMPTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS

The Municipality of Greater Amman is pleased to announce a programme of festivities to celebrate today the 45th anniversary of His Majesty King Hussein's assumption of constitutional power. The festivities include:

- Folklore and music show to be held at 8:00 p.m. in the square opposite City Hall at Ras Al 'Ain.
- Firework displays at City Hall, Irjan, the 6th Circle to be held simultaneously at 8:00 p.m.

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- Firework displays at City Hall, Irjan, the 6th Circle to be held simultaneously at 8:00 p.m.

A flower march to commence at City Hall at 6:00 p.m. The route of the march will go through Third Circle, 6th Circle, Medina Munawwara Street, Wasfi Tell Street, Sports City Circle, Al Istiqlal Street, Downtown, back to City Hall.

Everybody is invited to participate in these festivities, which are held to mark an occasion dear to all citizens, to honour our King and leader who spared no effort and left no stone unturned in the quest to bring honour, progress and prosperity to our beloved country.